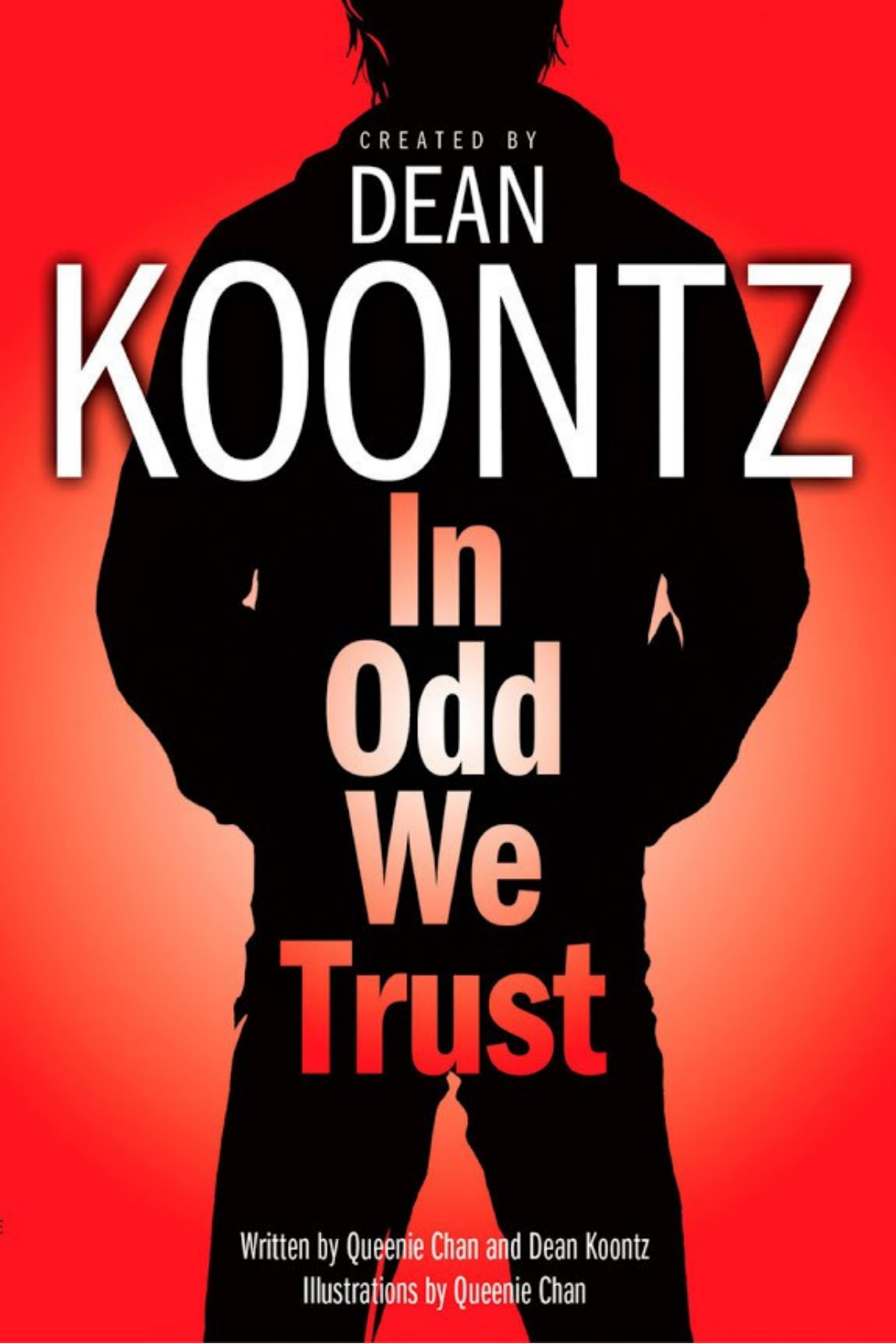




CREATED BY

DEAN

KOONTZ

In
Odd
We
Trust

Written by Queenie Chan and Dean Koontz
Illustrations by Queenie Chan

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

A black silhouette of a person wearing a suit and tie, centered against a vibrant red background. The person's arms are slightly away from their body, and their head is at the top of the frame.

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BALLANTINE BOOKS
NEW YORK

In Odd We Trust is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Also by Dean Koontz

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• The Husband • Forever Odd • Velocity • Life Expectancy • The Taking •
Odd Thomas • The Face • By the Light of the Moon • One Door Away From
Heaven • From the Corner of His Eye • False Memory • Seize the Night •
Fear Nothing • Mr. Murder • Dragon Tears • Hideaway • Cold Fire • The Bad
Place • Midnight • Lightning • Watchers • Strangers • Twilight Eyes •
Darkfall • Phantoms • Whispers • The Mask • The Vision • The Face of Fear •
Night Chills • Shattered • The Voice of the Night • The Servants of Twilight •
The House of Thunder • The Key to Midnight • The Eyes of Darkness •
Shadowfires • Winter Moon • The Door to December • Dark Rivers of the
Heart • Icebound • Strange Highways • Intensity • Sole Survivor • Ticktock •
The Funhouse • Demon Seed

DEAN KOONTZ'S FRANKENSTEIN

Book One: *Prodigal Son* • *with Kevin J. Anderson*

Book Two: *City of Night* • *with Ed Gorman*

Also by Queenie Chan

The Dreaming, volumes 1—3

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IN ODD WE TRUST

ABOUT THE CREATORS

THE ODD FACE IN THE MIRROR

An Excerpt from ODD THOMAS

ARTIST'S SKETCHBOOK

In Odd We Trust

Chapter 1



the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The number of people in the public sector who are employed in health care has increased by 1.2 million, from 1.3 million in 1980 to 2.5 million in 1995.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has grown so rapidly. One reason is that the government has increased its spending on health care. Another reason is that the population has aged, and older people are more likely to need health care. A third reason is that the government has increased the number of people who are employed in the public sector.

The growth of the public sector has led to a number of problems. One problem is that the government has not been able to keep up with the demand for health care. Another problem is that the government has not been able to pay its employees enough to attract and retain the best people. A third problem is that the government has not been able to provide the best possible care for its patients.

There are a number of ways in which the public sector can be reformed. One way is to increase the government's spending on health care. Another way is to increase the number of people who are employed in the public sector. A third way is to increase the government's efforts to attract and retain the best people.

The government has a number of options available to it. It can increase its spending on health care, it can increase the number of people who are employed in the public sector, and it can increase its efforts to attract and retain the best people. The government should consider all of these options and choose the one that is best for the country.

The government should also consider the needs of the population. The population is aging, and older people are more likely to need health care. The government should make sure that it has enough resources to provide the best possible care for its patients.

The government should also consider the needs of its employees. The government should make sure that it is paying its employees enough to attract and retain the best people. The government should also make sure that it is providing its employees with the best possible working conditions.

The government should also consider the needs of its patients. The government should make sure that it is providing the best possible care for its patients. The government should also make sure that it is providing its patients with the best possible information.

The government should also consider the needs of the public sector. The government should make sure that it is providing the best possible care for its patients. The government should also make sure that it is providing its employees with the best possible working conditions.

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BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP







IT'S THE SORT
OF PLACE MOST
PEOPLE ON A
ROAD TRIP TO
HOLLYWOOD
WOULD DRIVE
RIGHT
THROUGH...

...SO I
GUESS
LIVING
HERE ISN'T
EXACTLY
A THRILL A
MINUTE.



BUT THAT
DOESN'T
MEAN THIS
TOWN DOESN'T
HAVE ITS
BRUSHES
WITH FAME.

IN FACT,
YOU'D BE
SURPRISED
BY THE
VARIETY OF
PERSONALITIES
WHO FALL
INTO PICO
MUNDO'S
ORBIT.

FOR STARTERS,
THIS TOWN
WAS ONCE
VISITED BY THE
GHOST OF
EX-PRESIDENT
LYNDON B.
JOHNSON.





HE'D ALREADY
BEEN DEAD FOR
SOME TIME AND
HAD ARRIVED
HERE ON A
GREYHOUND,
STILL WEARING
HIS HOSPITAL
GOWN.



LOOKING
BACK,
PERHAPS
I SHOULD
HAVE FELT
FLATTERED
BY THE
SPECIAL
GESTURE.



THAT WAS
CERTAINLY
SOMETHING
THE VOTING
PUBLIC NEVER
GOT TO
SEE ON
TELEVISION.

APART
FROM DEAD
PRESIDENTS,

THERE'S
ALSO...
ELVIS.

DIVIDING
HIS TIME
BETWEEN
HAUNTING
THE BAPTIST
CHURCH AND
HAUNTING MY
LIVING ROOM,

"THE KING"
MAKES
PICO MUNDO
HIS POST-
HUMOUS
ABODE OF
CHOICE.

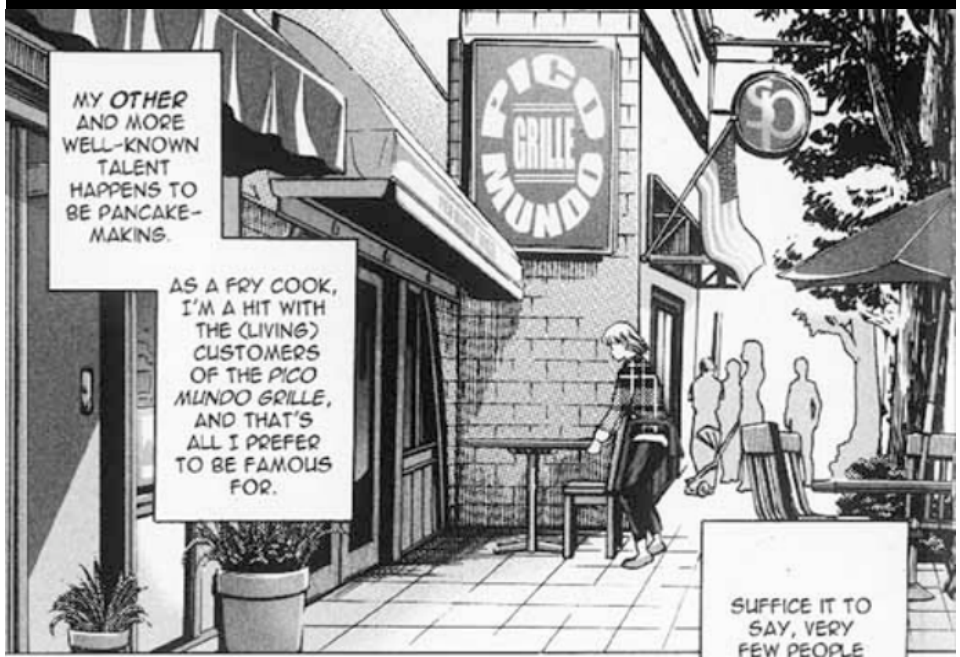
...I GUESS
MY LIFE IS
A LITTLE
PECULIAR
BY MOST
PEOPLE'S
STANDARDS.

YES,
THAT'S RIGHT.

I SEE DEAD PEOPLE.

MY NAME IS
ODD
THOMAS,
AND I
COMMUNE
WITH ELVIS.





MY OTHER
AND MORE
WELL-KNOWN
TALENT
HAPPENS TO
BE PANCAKE-
MAKING.

AS A FRY COOK,
I'M A HIT WITH
THE (LIVING)
CUSTOMERS
OF THE PICO
MUNDO GRILLE,
AND THAT'S
ALL I PREFER
TO BE FAMOUS
FOR.

SUFFICE IT TO
SAY, VERY
FEW PEOPLE
KNOW ABOUT
MY SUPER-
NATURAL GIFT.



GOOD
MORNING,
ODD!

MORNING,
TERRI.

ODD
THOMAS,
REPORTING
FOR
DUTY!





the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has become a major employer in the UK, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy.

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SO, THE
POLICE BEEN
BUSY THESE
DAYS,
WYATT?

OH, THE
POLICE
FORCE IS
ALWAYS
BUSY, TERRI.



YOU KNOW
US, PICO
MUNDO'S
STREET-
SWEEPERS
OF LAW AND
ORDER.

KEEPING OUR
TOWN CLEAR OF
UNSAVORY
CHARACTERS -
LIKE MUGGERS,
THIEVES,
JAYWALKERS
AND THE LIKE,
THOUGH --

SWEPT UP ANY
CHILD-KILLERS
LATELY, CHIEF?



Maravilla County Times

Intruder Kills Boy, 7, Home Alone

Child-
killer on
the loose!

Viet
Joe
Gi

...THOUGH
LATELY, THE
STREETS HAVE
INDEED GOTTEN
A BIT **FOULER**
THAN USUAL.





SO, THE
GORDON
HOUSE.

NICE UPSCALE
NEIGHBORHOOD.
THE WHOLE TWO-
AND-A-HALF KIDS,
COUNTRY-CLUB
MEMBERSHIP
SORT OF
PLACE.



TWO AFTERNOONS
AGO, ONE OF THE
NEIGHBORHOOD
SCHOOLS HAD AN
UNEXPECTED EARLY
CLOSING, DUE TO A
KITCHEN FIRE AT
LUNCHTIME.

PARENTS WERE
CALLED TO COME
SET THEIR KIDS.
ROUTINE IN
CIRCUMSTANCES
LIKE THIS.



THE GORDON
BOY IN
PARTICULAR
WAS PICKED UP
BY A NEIGHBOR,
AT 1:30 PM.

HIS MOTHER
GAVE THE
PERMISSION,
SAYING THAT THE
HOUSEKEEPER
WOULD BE AT
THE HOUSE
BY 2.



NOW, THE
HOUSE-
KEEPER.

ARMS FULL OF
SHOPPING, AND
IN THE DARK ABOUT
THE SCHOOL
CLOSING EARLY
AND THE BOY
BEING HOME ALONE.
SHE GETS THERE
15 MINUTES
LATE.

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YOU KNOW,
15 MINUTES.
YOU DON'T
THINK MUCH
CAN HAPPEN IN
15 MINUTES.

BUT A LOT
CAN HAPPEN.
A LOT CAN.

SHE COMES HOME,
AND WHAT DOES
SHE FIND?

DOOR AJAR.

NO BUSTED WINDOWS,
NO FORCED ENTRY,

JUST LITTLE JOEY GORDON,
STABBED FOUR TIMES IN THE CHEST,
LYING DEAD IN THE KITCHEN.

BAM.

A CHILD-
KILLER ON
THE LOOSE.

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I Well aren't you surprised to see this note here as well. Is you know I've been waiting for a long time now. I know not just about inside of your house the details of what you it as well. Just those



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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million (from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995). The number of people in the public sector who are employed in the health sector has increased by 1.2 million (from 1.2 million in 1980 to 2.4 million in 1995).

There is a growing emphasis on the need to improve the quality of health care. This has led to a number of initiatives, including the establishment of the National Health Service (NHS) Quality Standard, the introduction of the NHS Patient Charter, and the establishment of the NHS Complaints Procedure.

The NHS Quality Standard is a set of standards that all NHS organisations must meet. It covers a range of areas, including patient safety, patient experience, and the quality of care. The NHS Patient Charter is a document that sets out the rights and responsibilities of patients and the NHS. The NHS Complaints Procedure is a system for dealing with complaints about the NHS.

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UHHH, SIR.
STORMY
AND I ARE
BOTH 19.

I KNOW
YOU CARE
FOR US,
BUT WE'RE
NOT KIDS
ANYMORE.



I'M
AWARE
OF THAT.

I JUST
THOUGHT IT
WOULD BE
EASIER IF YOU
FOLLOWED MY
CAR, INSTEAD OF
ME FOLLOWING
YOU.



YOU MEAN...
LIKE A
REVERSE
CHAPERONE?

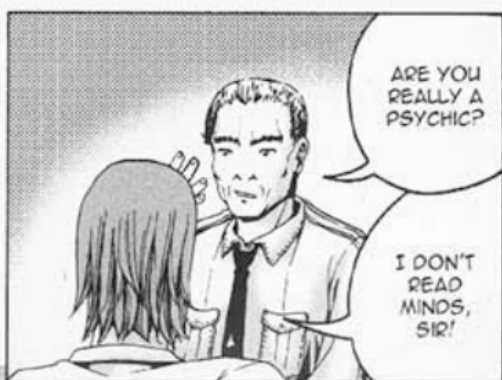
WHAT?



GORDON
HOUSE?!
WHY...?



YOU KNOW
HOW TO GET
TO THE
GORDON
HOUSE
ALL BY
YOURSELF?



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In Odd We Trust

Chapter 2





SHERRY.
THE ONE
HOUSEKEEPER
I KNOW, AND HE
TELLS ME IT'S
ACTUALLY HER.

GOD KNOWS
WHAT SHE'S
GOING
THROUGH
RIGHT NOW.



LUCKY FOR HER,
SHERRY IS A
CLOSE FRIEND
OF STORMY'S,

WHICH MEANS
SHE'S GETTING
ALL THE
EMOTIONAL AND
MORAL SUPPORT
ONE HUMAN BEING
CAN POSSIBLY
NEED.



STORMY AND
SHERRY GREW
UP IN AN
ORPHANAGE
TOGETHER.

A BOND LIKE
THAT CAN
GROW
STRONGER
WITH TIME.

I, ON THE
OTHER HAND,
AM NOT
ALL THAT
ACQUAINTED
WITH SHERRY.

WE'VE SWAPPED
A FEW RECIPES,
AND WE SOME-
TIMES WATCH
"IRON CHEF"
TOGETHER,
BUT THAT'S
ABOUT IT.

STILL, SHE
BAKES A MEAN
BLUEBERRY
MUFFIN, AND
HER FABULOUS
LASAGNA MAKES
ME WANT TO
CURL UP IN A
BALL, SUCK MY
THUMB, AND GIVE
UP COOKING.

SHE'S A
SWEET
GIRL, AND
GENTLE.

FOR SOME,
THAT MAKES
HER A
TEMPTING
TARGET.

SCREE



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HEY,

STORMY.



YOU KEEP
SHOWING
UP AT CRIME
SCENES LIKE
THIS,

PEOPLE
ARE GOING
TO WONDER IF
YOUR LIFE IS
ABOUT
HASH BROWNS
OR HOMICIDE.



...TRUST
ME,
ODD.



I HAVEN'T
FORGOTTEN
OUR DATE.



I JUST
KNEW YOU
WOULD FIND
YOUR WAY
HERE.

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SHERRY ...

HI, ODD.
HELLO,
CHIEF
PORTER.

I'M GLAD
YOU'RE
HERE.



THANK YOU
FOR SPEAKING
WITH ME HERE
TODAY. WE'RE
GRATEFUL FOR
YOUR HELP.

HOW
ARE YOU
HOLDING
UP?

...I'M
FINE, CHIEF,
THANK YOU.
BUT I **MUST**
SHOW YOU
SOMETHING.
THESE ARE
CREEPY.



RIGHT, RIGHT.
WHAT WE
SPOKE
ABOUT ON
THE PHONE.

YES. I'VE
GOT ALL
OF THE
LETTERS
HERE.

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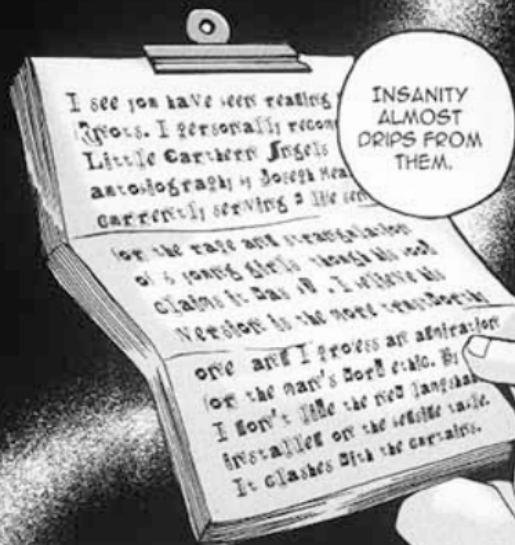
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I see you have been reading
Kippos. I personally recom-
mend Little Caribbea Jingles
autobiography by Joseph Mear
currently serving a life term

INSANITY
ALMOST
DRIPS FROM
THEM.

...MORE
LETTERS WITH
MAGAZINE
CUTOUTS FOR
WORDS?

CLEARLY
THIS GUY
DOESN'T
HAVE A
LIFE.



...WHICH
MAYBE IS
WHY HE TAKES
THE LIVES OF
OTHERS.

SO THE
ONLY CLUE
LEFT AT THE
CRIME SCENE
WAS A LETTER
JUST LIKE
THESE.

SO THE
CHIEF
TOLD ME.

THAT
LETTER WAS
MEANT
FOR ME.

AND I WAS
THE ONE WHO
WAS MEANT
TO DIE, NOT
LITTLE JOEY.

...!



the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has become an important employer of people with mental health problems.

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. The Department of Health (1995) has published a strategy for mental health care, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. The strategy states that 'the mental health of people in the public sector is a priority for the Department of Health' and that 'the Department will work to ensure that people in the public sector have access to the same high quality mental health services as the rest of the population'.

The Department of Health has set out a number of objectives for improving the mental health of people in the public sector. These include: to ensure that people in the public sector have access to the same high quality mental health services as the rest of the population; to ensure that people in the public sector are able to access mental health services when they need them; to ensure that people in the public sector are able to access mental health services in a timely and appropriate manner; and to ensure that people in the public sector are able to access mental health services in a way that is acceptable to them.

The Department of Health has also set out a number of measures to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. These include: to ensure that people in the public sector have access to the same high quality mental health services as the rest of the population; to ensure that people in the public sector are able to access mental health services when they need them; to ensure that people in the public sector are able to access mental health services in a timely and appropriate manner; and to ensure that people in the public sector are able to access mental health services in a way that is acceptable to them.

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IT ALL STARTED
TWO MONTHS AGO,

WHEN I FOUND AN
UNMARKED ENVELOPE
ON MY DOORSTEP.

INSIDE IT WERE THESE WORDS:

I am watching YOU, Sherry

I THREW
IT AWAY,
THINKING
IT WAS A
STUPID
JOKE.

BUT THEN, MORE LETTERS
STARTED COMING.

ALWAYS IN THE SAME KIND
OF UNMARKED ENVELOPE...

AND I BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT
THIS PERSON, WHOEVER IT WAS,
MUST BE WATCHING ME.

CLOSELY.

VERY CLOSELY.

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has become an important employer of people with mental health problems.

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. The Department of Health (1995) has published a strategy for mental health care, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. The strategy states that 'the mental health of people in the public sector is a priority for the Department of Health' and that 'the Department will work to ensure that people in the public sector have access to the same high quality mental health services as the rest of the population'.

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HE KNEW I BOUGHT
A NEW SET OF KNIVES.

HE KNOWS WHAT BRAND OF
REFRIGERATOR I HAVE.

HE KNOWS WHAT I'VE BEEN READING.

HE COMPLAINS ABOUT MY DECOR!

FOR TWO MONTHS IT WENT ON...

WHO IS HE,
AND WHAT DID
HE WANT
FROM ME?!

SHERRY,
WHY DIDN'T
YOU
CALL THE
POLICE?

SHE DID
CALL THE
POLICE.

BUT THE
LETTERS
WEREN'T FULL
OF EXPLICIT
THREATS. JUST
WEIRDNESS.

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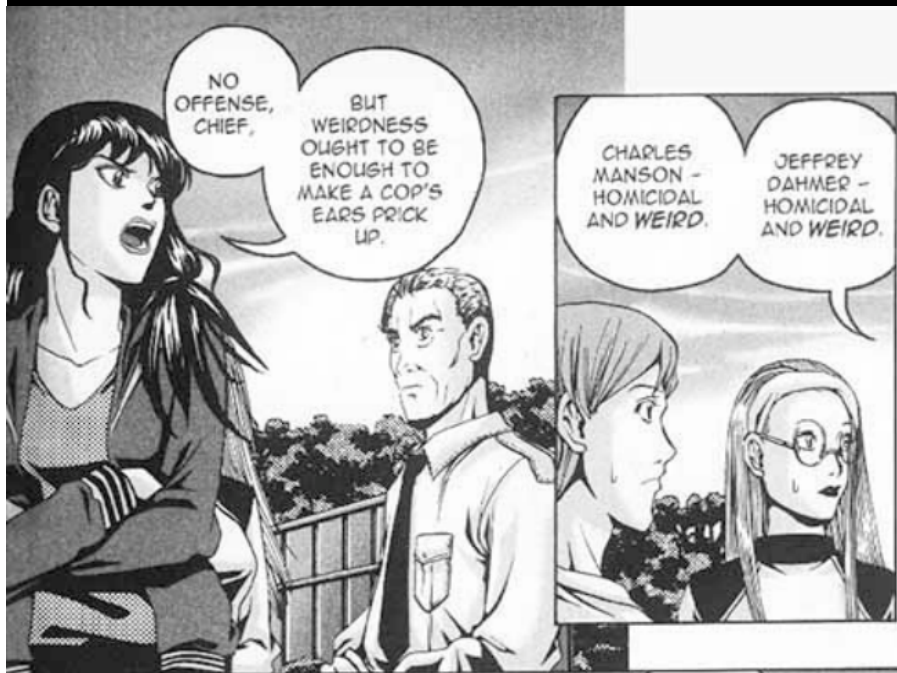
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I...



ACTUALLY,
ALL I WANT
RIGHT NOW IS
TO MAKE SURE
THE KILLER GETS
CAUGHT.



ANYTHING
I CAN
DO TO HELP
BRING HIM
DOWN...



THERE'S A LOT
OF WEIRDNESS
IN THE WORLD,
STORMY. AND
A LOT OF IT IS
BENIGN.



BUT WE'RE
ON THIS NOW
AND WE'LL
BULLDOGE IT.



MS.
SHELDON...
YOU SHOULD
HAVE GOTTEN
A BETTER
HEARING
FROM US.

YES, I
SHOULD
HAVE.



BUT...
THERE'S
ANOTHER
URGENT
MATTER I'M
WORRIED
ABOUT.



WHEN I WAS
BEING STALKED,
I NEVER GUESSED
THE GUY WOULD
GO SO FAR AS
TO INVOLVE MY
EMPLOYERS.

I THOUGHT
THAT AS LONG AS
THE TWO FAMILIES
I WORKED FOR
DIDN'T GET ANY
NOTES, THEY
WERE SAFE...

...AND I
WAS THE
ONLY ONE
AT RISK.



BUT
OBVIOUSLY I
WAS WRONG...
AND NOW
LITTLE JOEY
HAS PAID
FOR IT WITH
HIS LIFE.

IF ONLY
I HAD
SPOKEN UP
BEFORE!



STOP IT,
SHERRY!
YOU AND JOEY
ARE BOTH
VICTIMS
OF THE SAME
PERVERT!

THAT'S
NOT IT,
STORMY!



I'M
WORRIED
ABOUT
ANGELICA.

THE LITTLE
GIRL FROM THE
OTHER
FAMILY I
WORK FOR.

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has also become an important employer of women, with 50% of public sector employees being women in 1995.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in the workforce. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that women are more likely than men to work in the public sector, and the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of women in the workforce.

Another reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it provides a number of benefits that are attractive to women. These benefits include a high level of job security, a high level of pay, and a high level of social security. These benefits are all factors that are likely to attract women to the public sector.

Finally, the public sector has become an important employer of women because it provides a number of opportunities for women to advance in their careers. This is due to the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of women in the workforce, and the fact that the public sector has a high level of job security and pay. These factors are all likely to attract women to the public sector.

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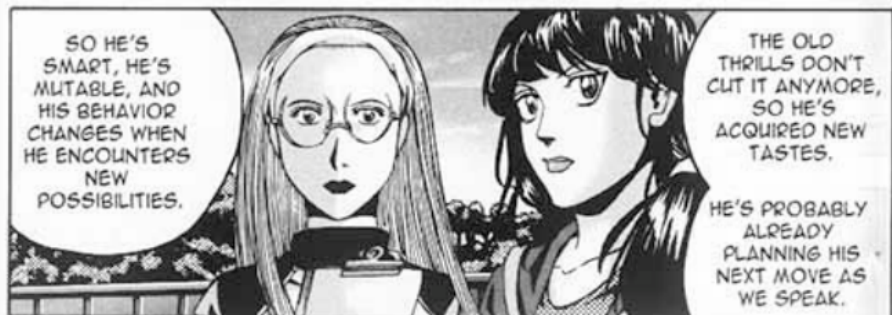
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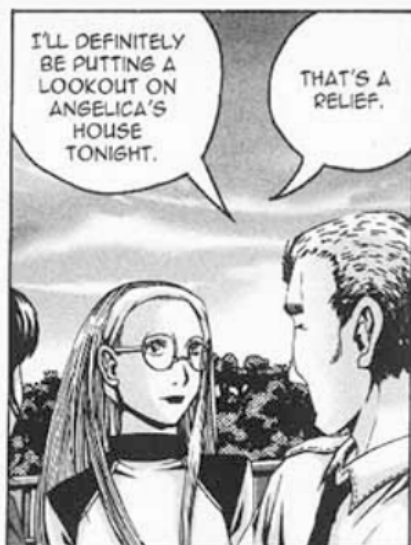
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SEE, HE
GOT THE "I"
FROM TIME
MAGAZINE,
AND THE "O"
FROM COSMO-
POLITAN.



...HUH?!

...DON'T YOU
RECOGNIZE
SOME OF
THE FONTS?



SHERRY LIKES
TO BROWSE
MAGAZINES
A LOT, BUT
MAN, COSMO-
POLITAN?



WHAT'S
WRONG
WITH
COSMO?!



...CAN I
READ THE
LETTERS
NOW?



I SEE YOU HAVE BEEN READING "WOUNDED KNOTS."

I PERSONALLY RECOMMEND "LITTLE EARTHEN ANGELS,"
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY JOSEPH MEAHE, CURRENTLY
SERVING 5 LIFE SENTENCES FOR THE RAPE AND STRANGULATION OF
6 YOUNG GIRLS (THOUGH HIS BOOK CLAIMS IT WAS 37).

I BELIEVE HIS VERSION IS THE MORE TRUSTWORTHY ONE,
AND I PROFFER AN ADMIRATION FOR THE MAN'S WORK ETHIC.

BY THE WAY, I DON'T LIKE THE NEW LAMP SHADE
YOU'VE INSTALLED ON THE BEDSIDE TABLE.

IT CLASHES WITH THE CURTAINS, ~~AND~~ IS
THOUGH HIS BOOK CLAIMS IT WAS

I BELIEVE HIS VERSION IS THE MORE

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I SEE YOU'VE PURCHASED A NEW SET
I SEE ! OF SCHILLINGS KITCHEN KNIVES.

IT'S AN EXCELLENT BRAND - I LOVE THEM,
IT AND I OWN THE SAME SET MYSELF.

THEY ARE STRONG, SHARP,
AND CUT THROUGH SKIN LIKE BUTTER.

WITH THESE, YOU CAN GUT AND JOINT
AN ANIMAL IN SECONDS. HOPEFULLY YOU'LL
BE ABLE TO PUT THEM TO GOOD USE.

you'll be able to gut them to
use.

set of Schillings Kitchen Knives.

It's an excellent brand I
love them and I own the same set
myself. They are strong sharp



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I felt like carving something
I FELT LIKE CARVING SOMETHING UP THIS MORNING.
IT'S A STRANGE KIND OF FEELING.

I FELT IT, TOO WHEN I STOOD IN YOUR KITCHEN,
HOLDING THOSE SCHILLINGS KNIVES OF YOURS.

FOR SOME REASON, THE MORE I HANDLE
YOUR KNIFE SET, THE MORE I FEEL THAT YOUR KNIVES
ARE OF A BETTER QUALITY THAN MY OWN SET.

I FEEL I'VE BEEN CHEATED, AND I FEEL
A BLISTERING KIND OF RESENTMENT.
AS I SAID, I FELT LIKE CARVING SOMETHING UP.
PERHAPS IT SHOULD BE THE KNIFE SALESMAN,
NOT THAT I CAN LOCATE HIM AGAIN.

Kind of resentment. As I said

I felt like carving something
Perhaps it should be the knife
locate

of yours. For some
more I handle your
the more I feel that
are of a better quality than
my own set. I feel I've been
I feel a blistering

CRUNCH





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...I WOULDN'T
ENJOY
BEING
ECTOPLASM.



I'LL
DREAM
ABOUT
YOUR
PANCAKES.

BYE.



...I WOULD
RATHER
SHE
DREAMED
ABOUT ME.



BUT GOOD
PANCAKES
ARE ONE
WAY TO A
WOMAN'S
HEART.



STORMY
MAY BE MY
GIRLFRIEND,
BUT SHE'S
ALSO A
LOT MORE
THAN THAT.

SHE'S MY
DESTINY.
THE TWO
OF US ARE
CARD-
CARRYING
SOUL MATES.





BUT THAT'S
NOT TO SAY
I'M DOING
THIS BECAUSE
SHERRY AND
STORMY
ARE GOOD
FRIENDS.

I'M DOING
THIS
BECAUSE
I AM
COMPELLED
TO DO IT.



MY SIXTH
SENSE
IS A WHIP.

IT CRACKS
THROUGH
ME, AND I
AM LASHED
INTO
ACTION.



MY NAME
IS ODD
THOMAS,
AND I SEE
DEAD
PEOPLE.



BUT THEN,
BY GOD,
I DO
SOMETHING
ABOUT IT.

In Odd We Trust

Chapter 3



THE
DEAD
DON'T
SPEAK.

WHY THEY
DON'T IS A
MYSTERY.

STILL...THEY'VE
NEVER HAD
ANY TROUBLE
COMMUNICATING
THEIR DESIRES
TO ME.

NOT ALL
SPIRITS ARE
VICTIMS WHO
WANT THEIR
KILLERS
BROUGHT
TO JUSTICE.

SOME WANT
COMPANY
WHILE THEY
HESITATE
TO MOVE
ON TO THE
NEXT LIFE.

OTHERS
DRIFT
AROUND,
CONFUSED



...THEN PICK
THEIR NOSES
JUST TO
MOCK ME.



OTHERS
LINGER FOR
UNKNOWN
REASONS,

PERHAPS
YEARNING
FOR ONE
MORE FRIED
PEANUT-
BUTTER-
AND-BANANA
SANDWICH.



SPIRITS WHO
WANT JUSTICE
ARE CLEAR
ABOUT IT,
ESPECIALLY
WHEN THEY
THINK THE
KILLER WILL
STRIKE AGAIN.



IT'S WHY
THESE
SPIRITS
ARE DRAWN
TO ME.





HONESTLY, THIS IS THE
FIRST TIME A SPIRIT HAS
RUN FROM ME.

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE
HE'S SO YOUNG.

MAYBE I LOOK LIKE A TEACHER
HE HATED AT SCHOOL.

MAYBE I NEED A SOCK PUPPET
AND A GOOFY VOICE?

HELLO, JOEY!
I'M SNAKEY,
AND THIS IS
MY SERVANT
ODD!

SHU
IT'S MONDAY.
TIME IS RUNNING OUT.

BUT, CHIEF PORTER WON'T
LET ANYTHING HAPPEN TO
THAT OTHER LITTLE GIRL...

WHAP

EARTH
TO ODD.
DON'T
BURN THE
BACON.

TERRI

SAVE THE
MIND TRIP
TO MARS
UNTIL YOUR
SHIFT ENDS.

LOOK
WHO'S
HERE!







The Pico Mundo Grille

HAPPINESS
IS A PLATE
OF GOOD
CARBS.

STORMY
SAYS
HAPPINESS
IS YOU.

SO,
YOU'RE
OFF TO
WORK
NOW?

YES.

I'LL BE
GOING TO THE
SMITHBURNS'
FROM HERE.

BUT I
NEED TO DO
SOME QUICK
SHOPPING
FIRST...

WANT
TO COME
ALONG,
STORMY?

SURE.
I'VE GOT
SOME TIME
BEFORE
WORK.



CAN YOU
HELP ME,
JOEY?
HELP
SHERRY?

CAN YOU
LEAD ME TO
THE MAN
WHO HURT
YOU?



HMM,

THIS IS
HIS OLD
NEIGHBOR-
HOOD.

JOEY,

SQUEEZE
MY HAND WHEN
YOU WANT
ME TO STOP
WALKING.

SQUEEZE



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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has also become an important employer of women, with 5.5 million women employed in the public sector in 1995, compared with 4.5 million in 1980.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in its workforce. In 1995, 88% of the public sector workforce were women, compared with 78% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

Another reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are full-time and permanent. In 1995, 68% of the public sector workforce were employed on full-time contracts, compared with 58% in 1980. This is due to the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are essential to the functioning of the state, such as those in the health and education sectors.

Finally, the public sector has become an important employer of women because it has a high proportion of jobs that are well-paid. In 1995, the average salary of a public sector employee was £18,000, compared with £15,000 in 1980. This is due to the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are in the higher grades of the public sector pay scale, such as those in the senior management and professional grades.

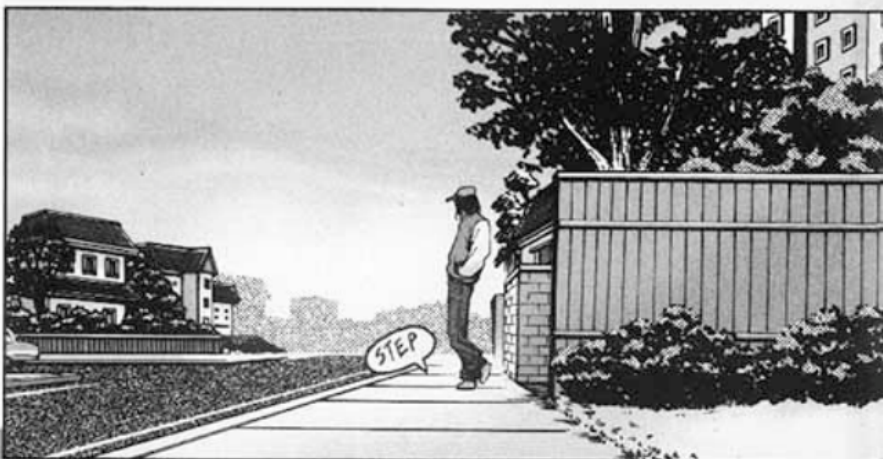
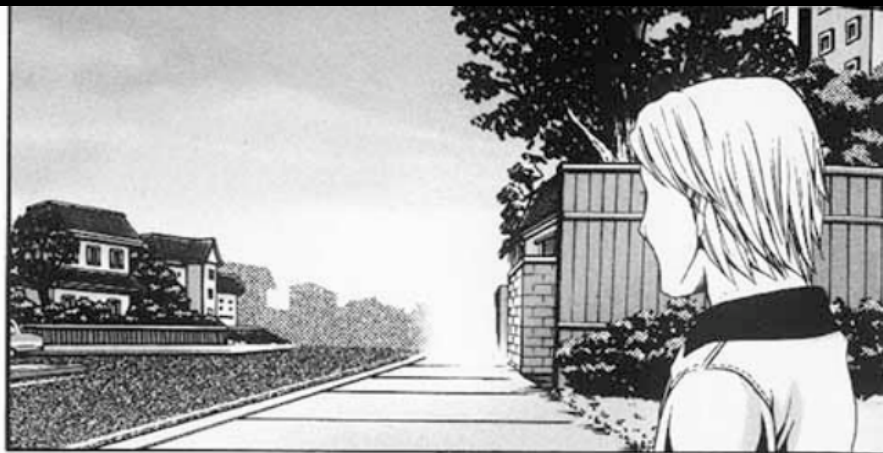
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THAT GUY WASN'T
THERE A MOMENT AGO.

IF HE WAS,
NEITHER SHERRY
NOR I NOTICED HIM
STANDING THERE.



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MAYBE HE FOLLOWED
SHERRY HERE.
DONT LIKE THE LOOK OF HIM.



JOEY DOESN'T LIKE
HIM, EITHER.



MAYBE
BECAUSE...



...THIS GUY
KILLED HIM?



EXCUSE
ME, SIR.

DO YOU
SPEND A LOT
OF TIME CUTTING
LETTERS
OUT OF
MAGAZINES?







RUSTLE
RUSTLE

INNOCENT GUYS
DONT RUN AWAY.

RUSTLE

...BASEBALL-CAP CREED
KNOWS THIS NEIGHBORHOOD
BETTER THAN I DO!

JOEY UNDERSTOOD
PERFECTLY WHAT I
ASKED OF HIM.

IF THIS GUY IS
SHERRY'S STALKER,

AND THE PERSON
JOEY INTENDED FOR
ME TO SEE...



...THEN HE IS,
WITHOUT A DOUBT,
JOEY'S KILLER!



BAM!





...LOST HIM!!



ALL RIGHT,
THEN...



I MAY BE
ABLE TO SEE
SPIRITS, BUT
IT'S NOT
THE ONLY
PARANORMAL
ABILITY I
POSSESS.

I HAVE ONE
MORE POWER,
ONE WHICH
GUIDES ME
WHEN SPIRITS
CANNOT.

IF I NEED TO
FIND SOMEONE,
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS
DRIVE THE STREETS
OR WALK THEM WHILE
THINKING OF HIS
NAME OR FACE.

THE POWER DOESN'T
ALWAYS WORK
BUT WHEN IT DOES,
IT PUSHES ME IN THE
RIGHT DIRECTION.



STORMY HAS A
NAME FOR IT --

--PSYCHIC
MAGNETISM.

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The public sector has also become a major employer of women. In 1980, only 1.5 million women were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 2.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of women in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with disabilities. In 1980, only 0.5 million people with disabilities were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with disabilities in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from ethnic minorities. In 1980, only 0.5 million people from ethnic minorities were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from ethnic minorities in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people who are over 50 years of age. In 1980, only 0.5 million people over 50 years of age were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people over 50 years of age in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people who are under 25 years of age. In 1980, only 0.5 million people under 25 years of age were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people under 25 years of age in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people who are over 65 years of age. In 1980, only 0.5 million people over 65 years of age were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people over 65 years of age in the workforce.

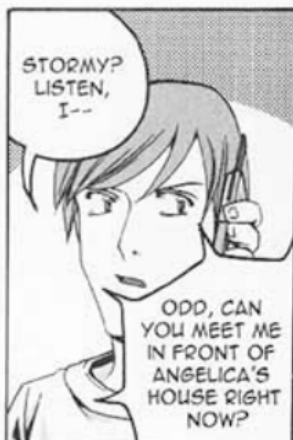
The public sector has also become a major employer of people who are under 16 years of age. In 1980, only 0.5 million people under 16 years of age were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people under 16 years of age in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people who are over 75 years of age. In 1980, only 0.5 million people over 75 years of age were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people over 75 years of age in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people who are under 10 years of age. In 1980, only 0.5 million people under 10 years of age were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people under 10 years of age in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people who are over 80 years of age. In 1980, only 0.5 million people over 80 years of age were employed in the public sector, but by 1995, this number had increased to 1.5 million. This increase has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people over 80 years of age in the workforce.

blip blip blip blippity bl
bada bing
ding
dinga dong
boop



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THIS IS A
PHOTOCOPIED
VERSION,
BUT THE NOTES
WERE ALL
HANDMADE.

ALL WENT TO
HOUSEHOLDS
WITH YOUNG
CHILDREN,
DROPPED OFF
THIS MORNING
BY HAND.

THEY
WERE IN
UNMARKED
WHITE
ENVE-
LOPES.

THE
FAMILIES
WHO GOT
THEM ARE...
DISTRESSED.

WHAT DO
THE LETTERS
SAY?

NOTHING
YOU DON'T
ALREADY KNOW,
MS. SHELTON.
YOUR NOTE AND
THE OTHER
THREE ARE
IDENTICAL.

I've always had a fondness for
white picket fences and manicured lawns -
they make me think of all the happy children
playing in their front yards. I wonder if they ever keep an eye
out for any strangers watching them?

THEY'RE SUCH PURE, INNOCENT CREATURES, AFTER ALL.
AS ADULTS, I BELIEVE WE ALL DESIRE A
PIECE OF SOMETHING WE NO LONGER HAVE,
SOMETHING WHICH ONLY CHILDREN POSSESS.
IT MAKES ONE YEARN FOR IT, IN
WHATEVER WAY YOU CAN CARVE IT FROM THEM.



SO MR. AND
MRS. SMITHBURN
FLEW TO
BAJA THIS
MORNING
AFTER ALL?

YEAH.

BUT I CALLED
THEM ABOUT
THE LETTER, AND
THEY'LL BE BACK
AS SOON AS
THEY CAN
CATCH A RETURN
FLIGHT.



I NEED
YOUR HELP,
ODD.



HE'S NOT
INTENDING
TO KILL FOUR
KIDS IN ONE
NIGHT, SIR.

I
AGREE.

HE'S TRYING
TO SPREAD US
THIN, DIVERT OUR
RESOURCES AWAY
FROM HIS REAL
TARGET -

MAYBE
EVEN A
FIFTH
CHILD.







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In Odd We Trust

Chapter 4



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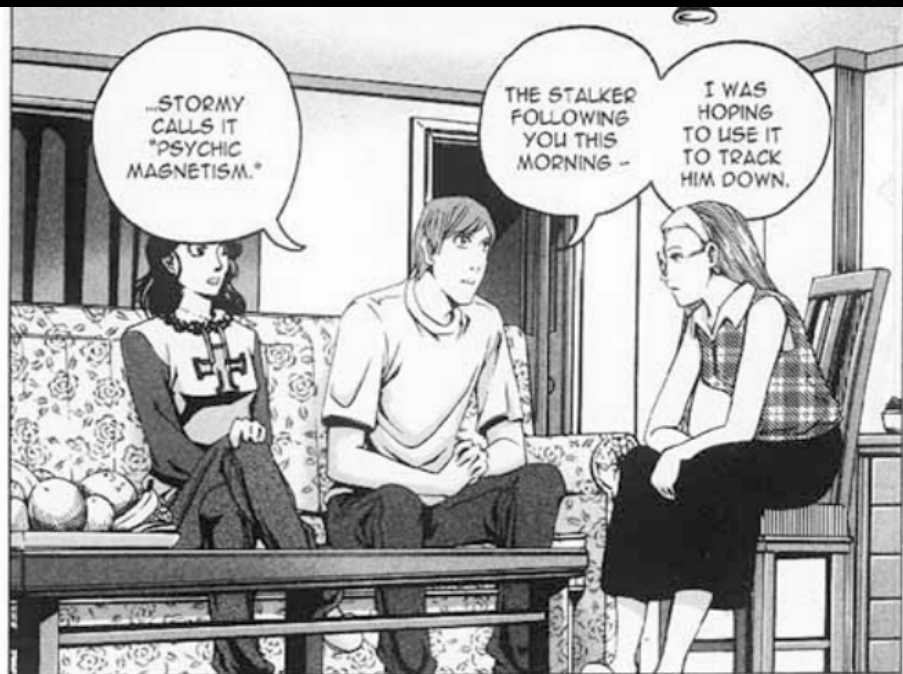
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...STORMY
CALLS IT
"PSYCHIC
MAGNETISM."

THE STALKER
FOLLOWING
YOU THIS
MORNING -

I WAS
HOPING
TO USE IT
TO TRACK
HIM DOWN.



BUT IT'S
HARD SINCE
I DIDN'T SEE
HIS FACE.

IF I'D
GOTTEN
CLOSE
ENOUGH
TO PUNCH
HIM--

--HE
WOULDN'T
BEEN CLOSE
ENOUGH TO
KNIFE YOU.

THOSE
GARDEN
GNOMES YOU
TRIPPED OVER -
THEY HAD YOUR
BEST INTERESTS
AT HEART.



BUT IF IT'S
TRULY
ANGELIC
THIS GUY'S
AFTER,

THEN OOO
WOON'T
HAVE TO RUN
ANOTHER
MARATHON.

THE KILLER
WILL COME
TO US, AND
WE'LL BE READY
FOR HIM.

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--SO YOU
YOU COULD
MEET THESE
NICE PEOPLE.

WHO?

THIS IS
ODD,
AND THIS IS
STORMY.

THEY'RE
STAYING
OVER TONIGHT,
TO HELP LOOK
AFTER YOU.

STAYING
OVER?
NO WAY.

DO MOM
AND DAD
KNOW ABOUT
THIS?

...YES
THEY DO,
SWEET-
HEART.

OH NO,
THIS KID
SEEMS LIKE
A HANDFUL.

WE'LL
HAVE A
SLUMBER
PARTY.

...BUT
THEY'RE
WEIRD.







WHAT?
WHAT'D
I SAY?

DRUNKS
ARE
TIGHT.



WE'RE...
ONE.



SO
WHEN'S
THE
WEDDING?

WHEN I'M
READY TO
BE...THAT
CLOSE.



WHAT
HAPPENED
TO YOU
BACK
THEN...

...YOU'VE
GOT TO
GET PAST
IT.



ADOPTED.

FREED
FROM THE
ORPHANAGE.



SEVEN
YEARS OLD,
BUT FINALLY
I'VE GOT
A HOME!

THEN...
TURNS OUT,
I'VE BEEN
ADOPTED BY
MONSTERS.



IT WAS
ONLY SIX
MONTHS.

YOU
CAME BACK
IN SIX
MONTHS.





FOREVER.

OR I'LL
KICK HIS
ASS.



I SWEAR.
HE'S A
FLYING
MONKEY.

MONKEYS
DON'T HAVE
WINGS!



HE
OWNS AN
AIRPLANE.

THAT'S
RIDICU-
LOUS!



JUST THIS
MORNING
HE FLEW TO
PARIS.

DID
NOT!



YOU'RE
RIGHT.

IT WAS
LONDON.

YOU
ARE TOO
STRANGE.
YOU'RE A
SILLY MAN!



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WANT SOME
PANCAKES,
ANGELICA?

WHA--
NO!

I MEAN--
THEY'RE
PROBABLY NOT
AS GOOD AS
MS. SHERRY'S
ANYWAY!



I GUESS
YOU DON'T
WANT ANY
THEN.

NO!
WAIT!
I--

ODD, IF
ANGELICA
HAS TOO MUCH
SUGARY FOOD,
SHE'LL REFUSE
TO EAT HER
GREENS.



AND IF THAT
HAPPENS,
YOU'LL HAVE
TO BE THE
ONE TO
PERSUADE
HER.

HEY, ANGELICA!
PANCAKES
ARE GREAT,
BUT I ALSO MAKE
VERY GOOD
VEGETABLE
CASSEROLE...



BLEACH!



REALLY GOOD
PANCAKES.
SO MAYBE
THE FLYING
MONKEY IS
TRUE.

AND I KNOW
A GORILLA
WHO GOES
SKYDIVING.

I GUESS
MAYBE
YOU DO.





ODD.

YOU
LOOK
WORN
OUT.



I JUST
WON A
WORD-WAR
WITH A
7-YEAR-OLD.

THEY CAN
TALK FASTER
AND LOUDER
THAN A
MACHINEGUN.



LOOK,
THERE'S
SOMETHING
YOU SHOULD
KNOW
ABOUT.

IT'S
ACROSS
THE
STREET.

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A MANNEQUIN.
I'D REALLY
BE CREEPED
OUT IF IT WAS
A MONKEY.

WHY
WOULD
IT BE A
MONKEY?

WHOSE
CAR IS
THIS?

NO PLATES.
WE'LL CHECK
THE VIN, SEE
WHERE THAT
GETS US.
PROBABLY
STOLEN.

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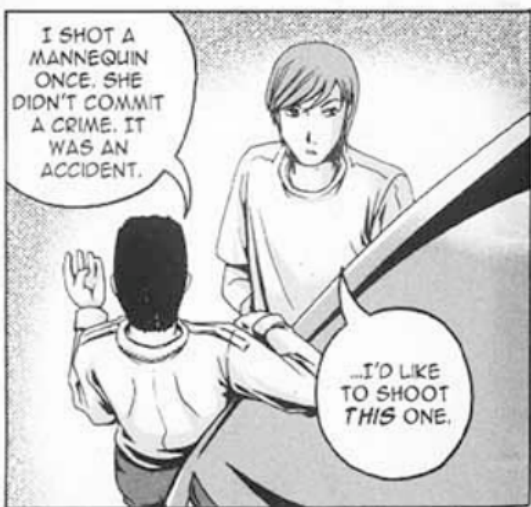
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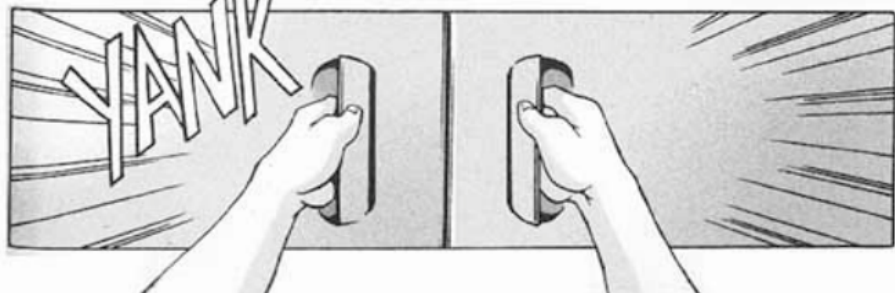
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YOU'RE NEVER
GETTING ANY
MORE OF
MY HASH
BROWNS.



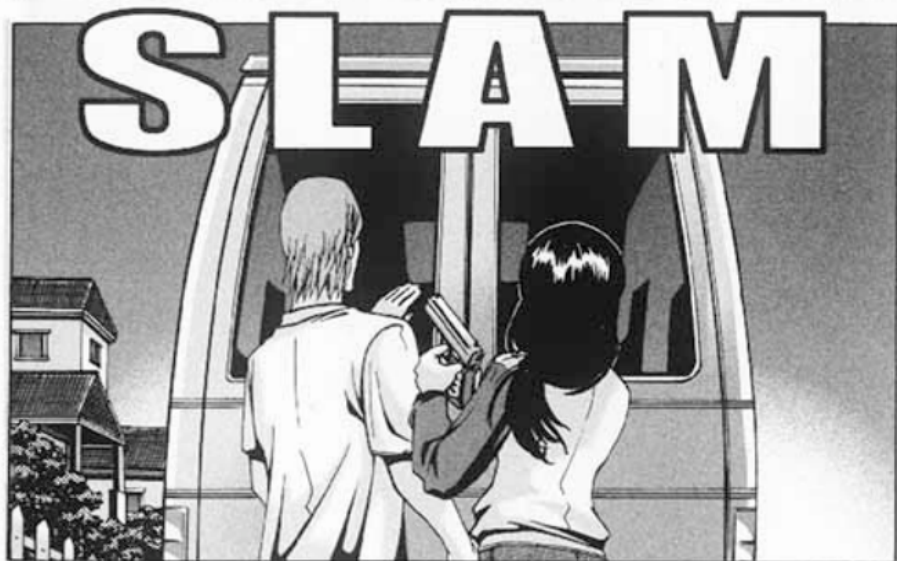
STORMY!



SHALL I
SHOOT
YOU NOW,

AND
SAVE THE
COPS THE
TROUBLE?





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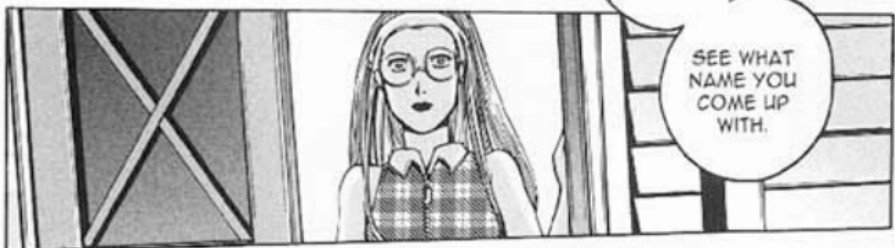
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the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased by 50% (Mental Health Foundation 1999). The prevalence of mental health problems has increased in the general population, and the incidence of mental health problems has increased in the prison population (Mental Health Foundation 1999).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the mental health needs of prisoners. The Department of Health (1999) has published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners. The Department of Health (1999) has also published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners.

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In Odd We Trust

Chapter 5



the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has become a major employer in the UK, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy.

The public sector has also become a major employer of women. In 1980, women made up 40% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 50%. This increase has been driven by a number of factors, including the growth of the public sector, the increasing participation of women in the workforce, and the increasing demand for public services.

The public sector has also become a major employer of young people. In 1980, young people made up 10% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 20%. This increase has been driven by a number of factors, including the growth of the public sector, the increasing participation of young people in the workforce, and the increasing demand for public services.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with disabilities. In 1980, people with disabilities made up 5% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 10%. This increase has been driven by a number of factors, including the growth of the public sector, the increasing participation of people with disabilities in the workforce, and the increasing demand for public services.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from ethnic minorities. In 1980, people from ethnic minorities made up 5% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 10%. This increase has been driven by a number of factors, including the growth of the public sector, the increasing participation of people from ethnic minorities in the workforce, and the increasing demand for public services.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower social classes. In 1980, people from the lower social classes made up 5% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 10%. This increase has been driven by a number of factors, including the growth of the public sector, the increasing participation of people from the lower social classes in the workforce, and the increasing demand for public services.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower income groups. In 1980, people from the lower income groups made up 5% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 10%. This increase has been driven by a number of factors, including the growth of the public sector, the increasing participation of people from the lower income groups in the workforce, and the increasing demand for public services.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower education levels. In 1980, people from the lower education levels made up 5% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 10%. This increase has been driven by a number of factors, including the growth of the public sector, the increasing participation of people from the lower education levels in the workforce, and the increasing demand for public services.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower health status. In 1980, people from the lower health status made up 5% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 10%. This increase has been driven by a number of factors, including the growth of the public sector, the increasing participation of people from the lower health status in the workforce, and the increasing demand for public services.

KYLE
BERNSHAW.

CLICK

THE VAN IS
REGISTERED
TO HIM.

GUY
LIVES
ALONE -

HIS
ADDRESS
IS 76
SHADYSIDE
LANE.

THAT'S
WALKING
DISTANCE
TO THE GORDON
AND SMITHBURN
HOUSES.

MOST
SOCIOPATHS
HATE
COMMUTING.

THEY LIKE
TO KILL
CLOSE
TO HOME.

SAVES
A LOT
OF GAS
MONEY.



MAYBE HE'S
CONCERNED
ABOUT GLOBAL
WARMING.

WHATEVER
YOU'RE
GOING
TO DO...



REMEMBER
I'LL BE
JUGGLING
TRAFFIC FOR
THE NEXT FEW
HOURS...

YEAH, THE
TOWN
PARADE.



I KNOW I
CAN TRUST
YOU NOT TO
DO ANYTHING
STUPID, SON.



I WON'T BE
RECKLESS,
SIR.

I'M FULLY
CAPABLE OF
STUPIDITY.

FAIR
ENOUGH.



WHEN YOU
WERE YOUNG,
SIR, DID YOU
DO STUPID
THINGS?

NOT JUST
WHEN I WAS
YOUNG.

BE
CAREFUL,
SON.

CLICK





the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has become an important employer of people with mental health problems.

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. The Department of Health (1995) has published a strategy for mental health care, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. The strategy states that 'the mental health of people in the public sector is a priority for the Department of Health' and that 'the Department will work to ensure that people in the public sector have access to the same high quality mental health services as the general population'.

The Department of Health has also published a number of guidelines for the management of mental health problems in the public sector. These guidelines are designed to help public sector employers to identify and manage mental health problems in their workforce. The guidelines state that 'public sector employers should have a policy on mental health problems' and that 'public sector employers should ensure that people with mental health problems are able to continue to work, where possible'.

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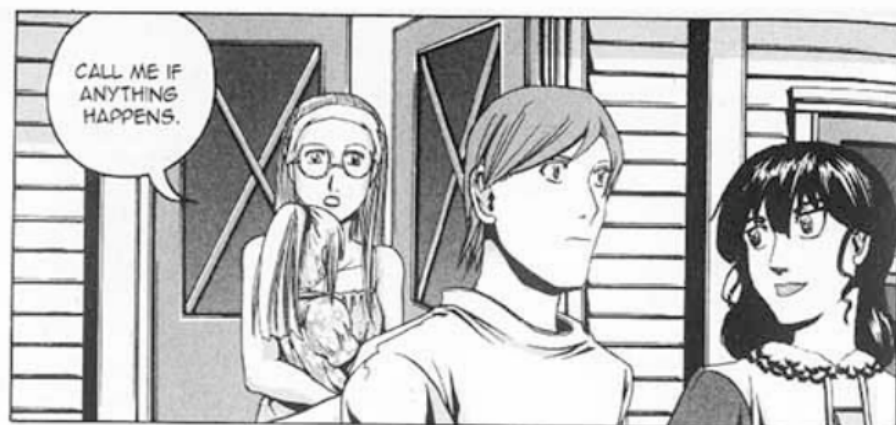
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NOTHING?
I'LL BET IT'S
FRIENDLY
ECTOPLASM.

WHO
IS IT?

IT'S A
LITTLE BOY
WITH A BIG
SMILE - THE
FIRST I'VE
SEEN FROM
HIM.

I MUST
BE DOING
SOMETHING
RIGHT.

WHOA,

THIS IS
BERNSHAW'S
HOUSE?
ARE YOU
SURE?

YEAH.
FOR A
PSYCHOTIC
LUNATIC,
HE'S DONE
WELL FOR
HIMSELF.

BET HE
MARRIED AN
OLD WOMAN
AND THEN
PUSHED HER
DOWN THE
STAIRS.

MONEY
GIVES HIM THE
FREEDOM TO BE
AS PSYCHOTIC
AS HE WANTS
TO BE.

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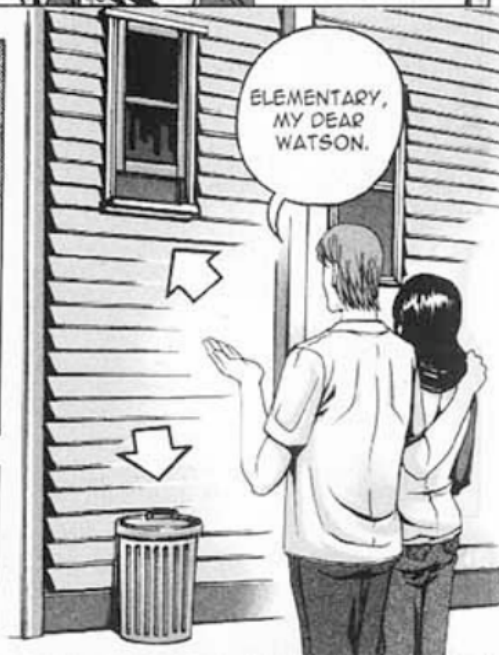
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HE'S GOT
A THING FOR
MAGAZINES.

IT'S LIKE A
LABYRINTH
IN HERE.

A
MAGAZINE
MAZE.

THIS FREAK'S
CRAZY TANK
IS NEVER
GONNA RUN
DRY.



THE
PASTED-UP
MESSAGES
HE SENT...



SEE IF HE'S
LEFT ANY
HALF-FINISHED
LETTERS LYING
AROUND THE
HOUSE.

I see you've purcha
set of ~~Schillings~~
It's an excellen
love them and I
myself. They
and got th

HE
WOULDN'T
BE THAT
CARELESS.



I'M GOING
INTO THE
NEXT
ROOM.

MAYBE
THAT'S WHERE
HE KEEPS
THE SEVERED
HEADS.







MAYBE
HE WANTS
TO BE
PEN PALS.



"DEAR
BURGER BOY,
YOU ARE
OUTCLASSED.

YOU SHOULD
HAVE STAYED
AT YOUR
GRIDDLE."



"YOU ARE
IGNORANT,

FOOLISH,
INEFFECTIVE,

AND YOUR
PANCAKES
SUCK."



CHILD-KILLING
IS BAD
ENOUGH.
NOW HE'S
GONE
TOO FAR.

YOU CAN
SPANK HIM
LATER.
FINISH THE
LETTER.



"POOR
BLACKIE
HASN'T
BEEN FED
IN DAYS.

TOO BAD
YOU DON'T
HAVE SOME
BURGERS
WITH YOU.

BUT THEN...
HE LIKES
ANY KIND
OF MEAT."



GOOD DOG.
NICE DOG.

BIG
DOG.

GRRRR
GRRRR
GRRRR...

SHAKE?

ODD?
WHAT'S
THAT
GROWLING?

IT'S
NOT MY
STOMACH.

GRRRR

RAWR

ARRRGH
---!!!



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TROUBLE.
IS IT
TROUBLE?

I STILL
HAVEN'T
HAD A CHANCE
TO SHOOT
ANYTHING.

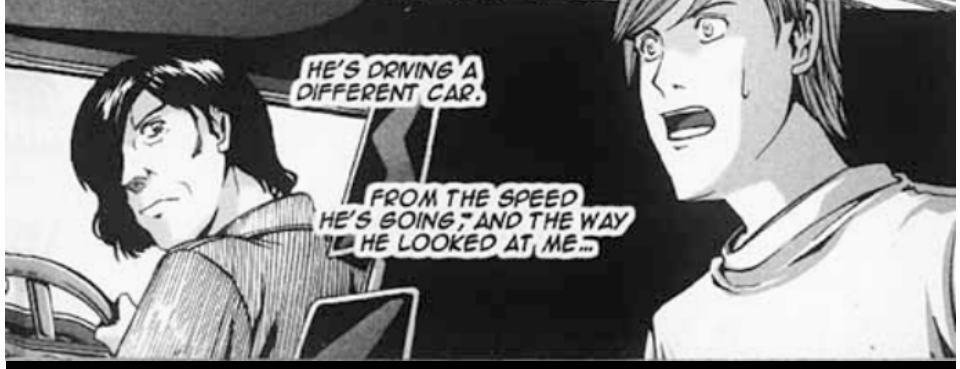
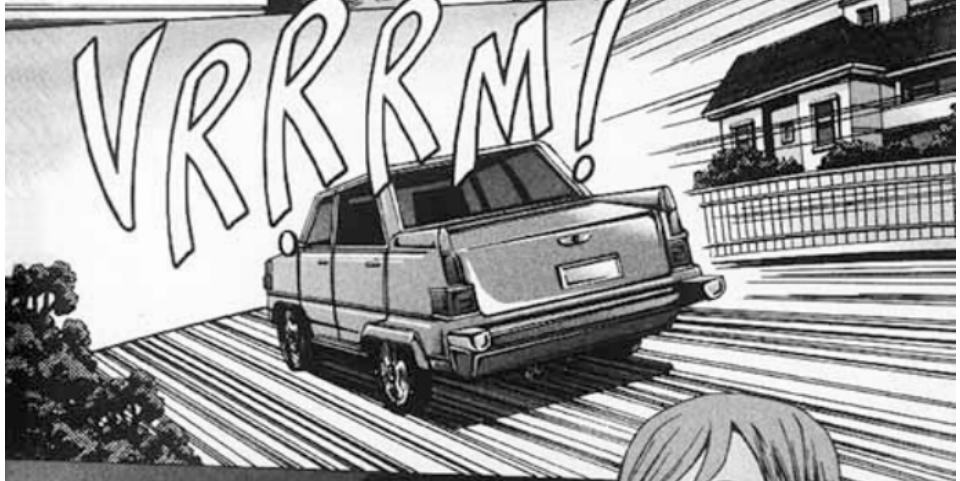




KYLE
BERN-
SHAW!!!



VRRRM!



HE'S DRIVING A
DIFFERENT CAR.

FROM THE SPEED
HE'S GOING, AND THE WAY
HE LOOKED AT ME...





WE'VE BEEN SKUNKED!!



ANGELICA!

ANGELICA!!



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EH?

WHERE
DID SHE
GO?

SHE LEFT
ABOUT FIVE
MINUTES
AGO.



WE OFFERED
TO GIVE HER
A LIFT, BUT
SHE WANTED
TO WALK.



UH, SO,
YOU MEAN THE
POTENTIAL VICTIM
GETS POLICE
PROTECTION, BUT
NOT THE WOMAN
ORIGINALLY
STALKED?



BUT IF IT'S
TRULY
ANGELICA
THIS GUY'S
AFTER,

THEN ODD
WON'T
HAVE TO RUN
ANOTHER
MARATHON.



THE KILLER
WILL *COME*
TO US, AND
WE'LL BE READY
FOR HIM.

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WATCHED HIM
THIS MORNING
AND DROVE
OFF TO THE
SUPERMARKET.

I'M WATCHING
HIM LOAD

USING A DECOY CAR AND ACCOMPLICE TO THROW
THE POLICE OFF HIS REAL MOVEMENTS.

USING DUPLICATE LETTERS TO TRICK US
INTO THINKING HE WAS TARGETING
FOUR CHILDREN, INSTEAD OF ONE.

HE NOTES
HOW ALL
FAMILIAR

HE WENT TO
SCHOOL WITH
HIS YOUNG
Cousin
OWNED ON
THE HOUSE
EY FARD

THEY
WERE A
UNUSUAL
PAIR
LOVES

THE
FAMILY
WAS NOT
THEIR
APR
DISGRACE

USING OUR FOCUS ON A "CHILD-KILLER"
TO DRAW US AWAY FROM HIS REAL TARGET!



HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER

HE WAS AFTER
SHERRY ALL ALONG!



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In Odd We Trust

Chapter 6



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BERNSHAW DIDN'T
SET OUT TO KILL JOEY.
JOEY JUST SHOWED UP
IN THE WRONG PLACE
AT THE WRONG TIME.



LADIES
AND
GENTLEMEN,

THE PICO MUNDO
FOUNDERS' DAY
PARADE IS ABOUT
TO COMMENCE.
PLEASE STAND
BEHIND THE
BARRICADES.

BERNSHAW WAS STALKING SHERRY,
FIXATED ON HER, ONLY HER.



YET WHEN A CHILD CLOSE
TO HER WAS KILLED,
WE AUTOMATICALLY ASSUMED
THE NEXT VICTIM WOULD
BE ANOTHER CHILD.

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IT WAS ALWAYS
SHERRY HE WANTED.

EVEN THOUGH I SEE DEAD PEOPLE
AND HAVE PSYCHIC MAGNETISM,
MAYBE I SHOULD JUST STAY
AT THE GRILL AND GRIDDLE!

NOT ODD THOMAS.

IDIOT THOMAS!

TERRI!!





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THERE'S NEVER
A PARADE WHEN
YOU NEED ONE,
ONLY WHEN IT
SCREWS
THINGS UP.

IT'S
SCREWING UP
BERNSHAW'S
ESCAPE,
TOO.



TAKE THE BACK
STREETS, DODGE
THE TRAFFIC BOTTL-
NECKS. MAYBE
YOUR PSYCHIC
MAGNETISM
WILL KICK IN.



NOW'S THE
TIME TO HAVE
A BLIMP.
I'VE ALWAYS
WANTED A
BLIMP.

IF HE HURTS
SHERRY...
I'LL KILL THAT
CREEP.



...HE'S TAKING
HER ONTO
HIGHWAY 76,
I FEEL IT...

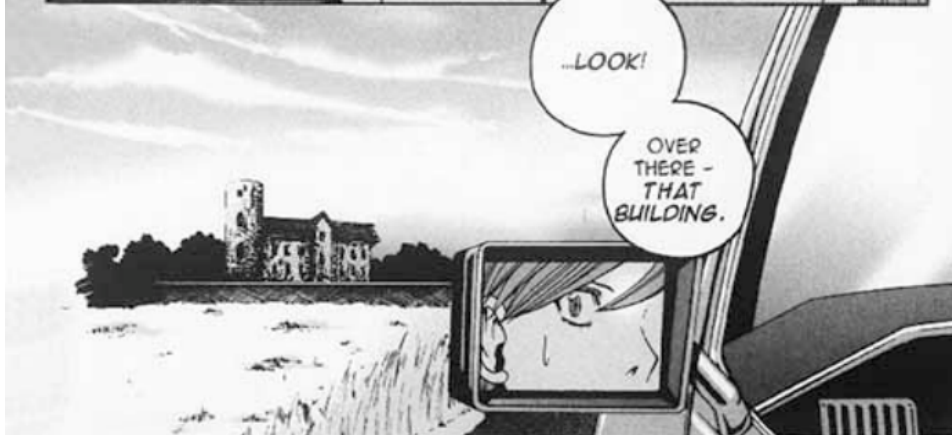
...STRAIGHT
OUT OF
TOWN.

IF THAT
HAPPENS...









the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1999. The public sector has also become an important employer of people with disabilities, with 1.5 million people with disabilities employed in the public sector in 1999, compared with 1.2 million in 1980.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of people with disabilities. One reason is that the public sector has a long history of employing people with disabilities. In the 19th century, the public sector employed people with disabilities in a number of different roles, including as clerks, typists, and stenographers. In the 20th century, the public sector continued to employ people with disabilities in a variety of roles, including as teachers, nurses, and social workers.

Another reason why the public sector has become an important employer of people with disabilities is that it has a number of advantages over the private sector. For example, the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more stable and secure employment environment than the private sector. This is because the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more predictable and stable income, and a more secure job.

There are also a number of other reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of people with disabilities. For example, the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more flexible and adaptable employment environment than the private sector. This is because the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more flexible and adaptable working schedule, and a more adaptable job.

There are also a number of other reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of people with disabilities. For example, the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more supportive and caring employment environment than the private sector. This is because the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more supportive and caring working environment, and a more caring job.

There are also a number of other reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of people with disabilities. For example, the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more challenging and stimulating employment environment than the private sector. This is because the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more challenging and stimulating working environment, and a more stimulating job.

There are also a number of other reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of people with disabilities. For example, the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more rewarding and fulfilling employment environment than the private sector. This is because the public sector is often able to offer people with disabilities a more rewarding and fulfilling working environment, and a more fulfilling job.

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SHE
SEEMS
OKAY.

BUT
WHERE'S
BERNSHAW?

OUTSIDE?
GONNA
LOCK US
IN HERE WITH
SHERRY?

I'LL CHECK
AROUND THE
OUTSIDE.

YOU FREE
SHERRY.

SHERRY
...!









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The public sector has also become a major employer of women. In 1980, women made up 40% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 50%. This increase in the number of women in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of women in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with disabilities. In 1980, people with disabilities made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people with disabilities in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with disabilities in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from ethnic minorities. In 1980, people from ethnic minorities made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from ethnic minorities in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from ethnic minorities in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower social classes. In 1980, people from the lower social classes made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower social classes in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower social classes in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower income groups. In 1980, people from the lower income groups made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower income groups in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower income groups in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower education levels. In 1980, people from the lower education levels made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower education levels in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower education levels in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower health status. In 1980, people from the lower health status made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower health status in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower health status in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower life expectancy. In 1980, people from the lower life expectancy made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower life expectancy in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower life expectancy in the workforce.



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The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower health status. In 1980, people from the lower health status made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower health status in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower health status in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower life expectancy. In 1980, people from the lower life expectancy made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower life expectancy in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower life expectancy in the workforce.



the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has also become an important employer of women, with 5.5 million women employed in the public sector in 1995, compared with 4.5 million in 1980.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in its workforce. In 1995, 88% of the public sector workforce were women, compared with 78% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

Another reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are part-time or flexible. In 1995, 38% of the public sector workforce were employed on part-time or flexible contracts, compared with 28% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

A third reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are well paid. In 1995, the average salary of a public sector employee was £18,000, compared with £15,000 in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

There are a number of other reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are secure. In 1995, 88% of the public sector workforce were employed on permanent contracts, compared with 78% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

Another reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are well located. In 1995, 38% of the public sector workforce were employed in London, compared with 28% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

A third reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are well matched to women's skills. In 1995, 88% of the public sector workforce were employed in jobs that required a degree or higher qualification, compared with 78% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

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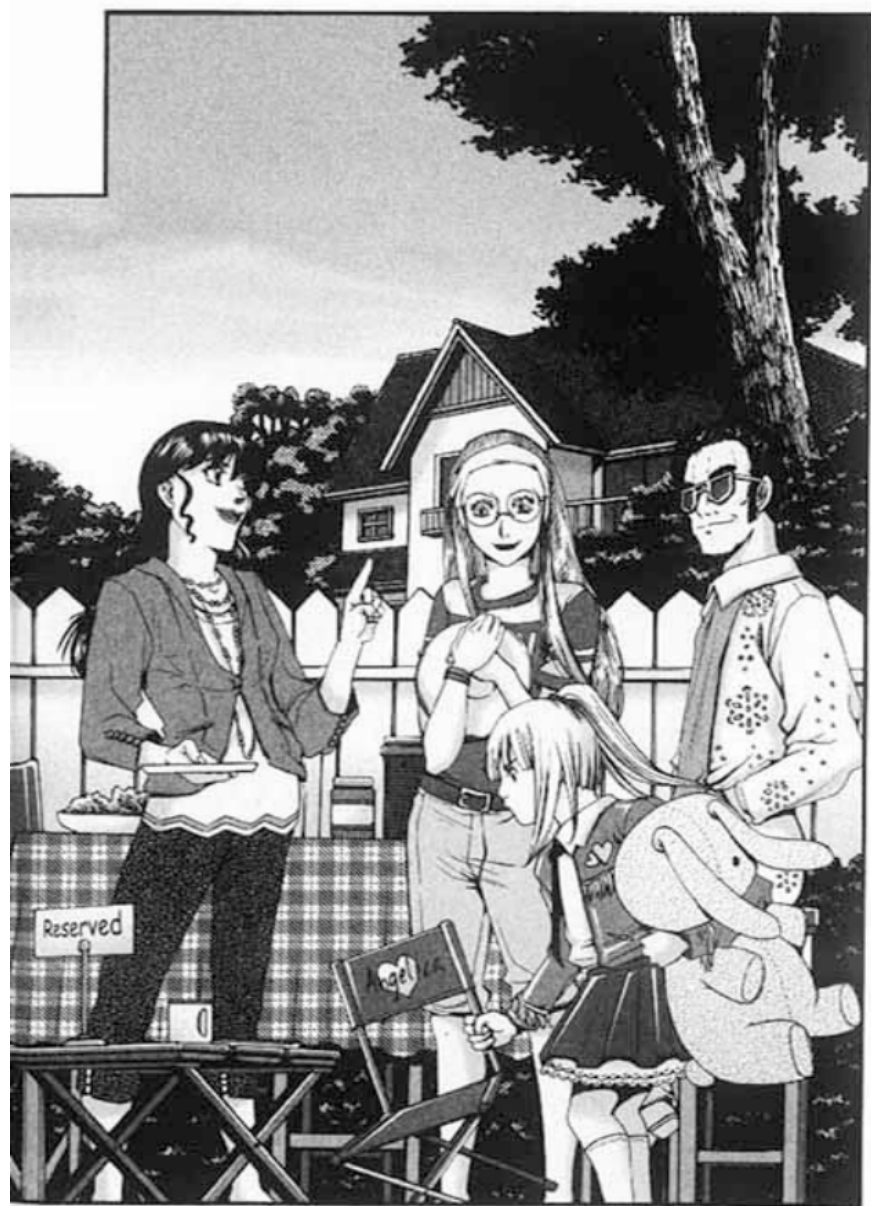




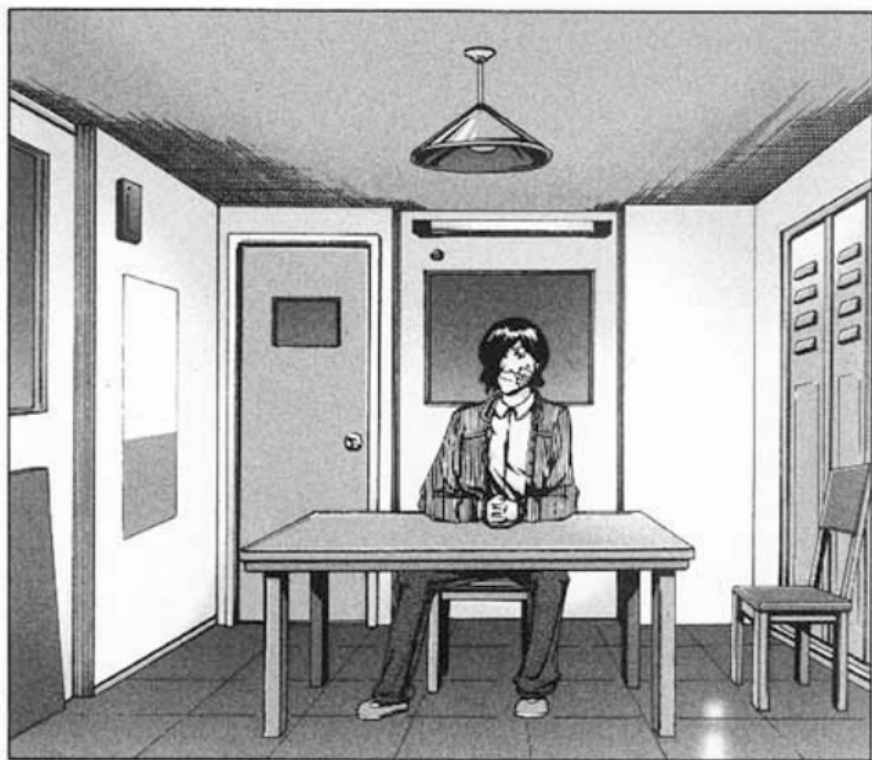
In Odd We Trust

Chapter 7









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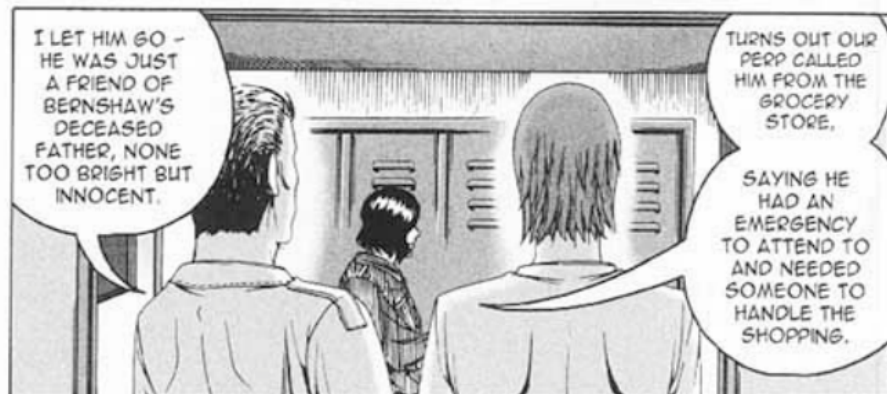
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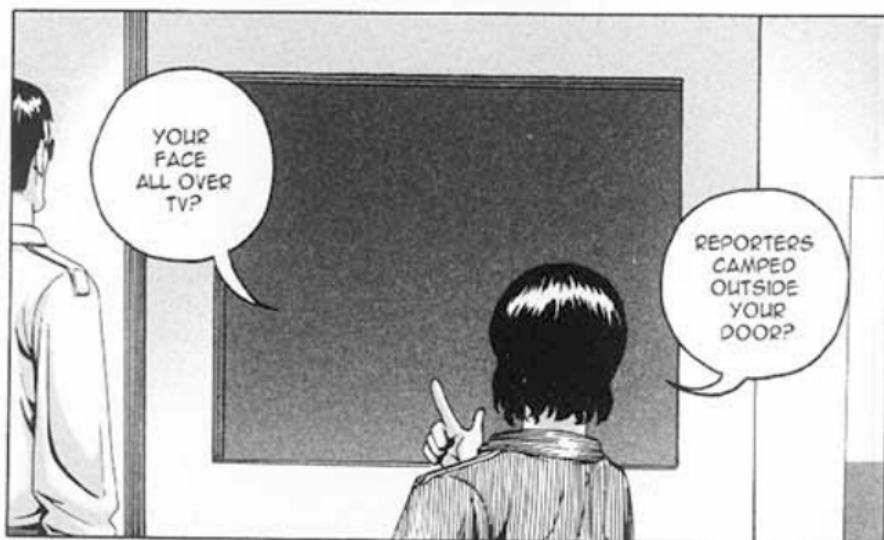
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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has also become an important employer of women, with 60% of public sector employees being women in 1995, compared with 50% in 1980.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work. Another reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are part-time or flexible, which are more likely to be held by women.

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WHAT DID
HE WANT TO
TALK ABOUT,
ODDIE?



I DON'T
KNOW
WHY I
SAID WHAT
I SAID.

I JUST
TRUSTED
MY
INSTINCT.

YOU WON'T
EVER DIE.

YOU'LL
LIVE
FOREVER.

YOU ARE
PSYCHIC.

YOU
KNOW!

YES.
I KNOW.

OR...

...MAYBE
YOU MADE A
BARGAIN OF
YOUR OWN.

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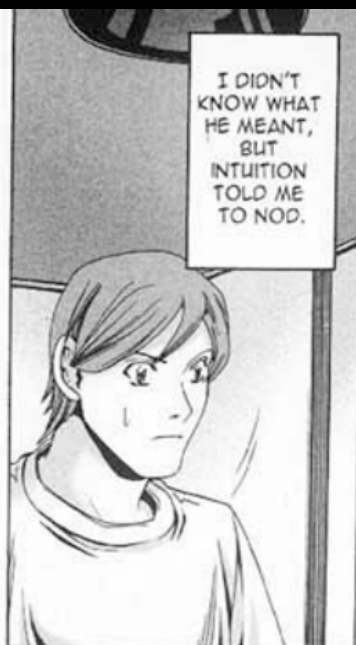
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THINKS HE
SOLD HIS
SOUL TO
THE DEVIL?



IN RETURN
FOR PHYSICAL
IMMORTALITY.



BUT I
WOUNDED
HIM IN
THE LEG!



BUT YOU
DIDN'T
KILL HIM,
DID YOU?



HE SHOULD
HAVE MADE
A BETTER
DEAL.

HE THINKS
SO, TOO.

I...
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There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. The Department of Health (1995) has published a strategy for mental health care, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of people in the public sector. The strategy states that 'the mental health of people in the public sector is a priority for the Department of Health' and that 'the Department will work to ensure that the mental health of people in the public sector is protected and promoted'.

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THEY CAME
TO TAKE
HIM TO
HIS CELL.

THEN THE
WORLD
BROUGHT
BERNSHAW
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WANTED.



THE GUARD HAD
A HEART ATTACK.



ARRGH!!!

...AND DROPPED
TO THE FLOOR.



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BULLET RICOCHETED OFF
THE METAL CHAIR LEG...

PLING



...AND...

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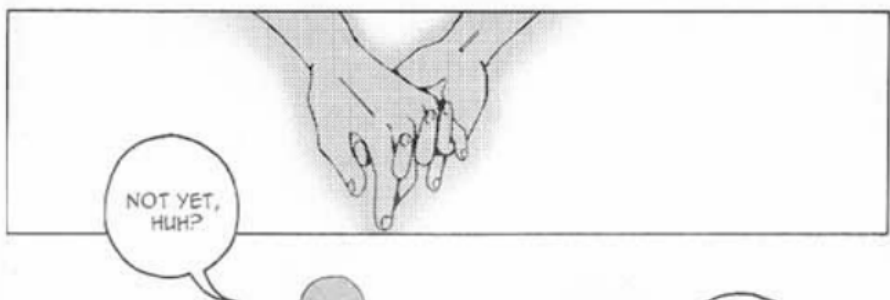
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- The End -

ABOUT THE CREATORS

DEAN KOONTZ is the author of many #1 *New York Times* bestsellers. He lives with his wife, Gerda, in Southern California.

QUEENIE CHAN was born in 1980 in Hong Kong and emigrated to Australia when she was six years old. She began drawing at the age of 18 and graduated in 2002 with a degree in Information Systems. In 2004, she began drawing a mystery-horror series called *The Dreaming* for Los Angeles-based manga publisher Tokyopop, the three volumes of which are now available. It has been translated into four languages. Apart from her professional work, Queenie Chan also draws a number of online manga strips on her personal site:

<http://www.queeniechan.com/>

THE ODD FACE IN THE MIRROR

Dean Koontz

DURING MY CAREER, I have written a townful of characters, maybe enough of them to populate Pico Mundo, California, in which Odd Thomas lived his first twenty years. I have provided physical descriptions of those people, some in more detail than others. In all but one case, during the writing of the books in which those people appeared, I had vivid images of their faces in my mind.

The exception was Odd Thomas. By page two, I knew Oddie more intimately than I had ever known another character after writing so few words about him. What I knew of Odd, however, was his heart, every chamber of it, all its secrets, all the hopes and dreams that he sheltered there, all his losses. I knew his goodness, his self-doubt, his capacity for friendship and for love, his extraordinary humility. I did not know what his face looked like.

Because the book employed a first-person point of view, I could not describe him from the eyes of another character, and I did not want to engage in any hokum like having him look in a mirror and describe himself. Rather than stop writing and brood about his face, I let the narrative flow, certain that the details would accumulate until I could see him clearly in my mind's eye.

By the time I finished Odd Thomas, the first novel in the series, I not only knew Odd's heart but also the singular workings of his mind, and not least of all the architecture of his soul. I knew him as well as—perhaps better than—I knew myself. I knew his body type. His physical qualities were clear: real strength without Schwarzeneggerian muscularity; masculinity without bravado; natural athleticism; the agility of a dancer; confidence in every pose and position, but never arrogance; self-effacement that expressed even in his physicality, so that he seemed unremarkable though he was in fact exceptional.

After three books—and a fourth in the works—I do not know his face.

The actor to whom readers most often refer is Tobey Maguire, and I think Mr. Maguire—although soon too old for the part—would be terrific because he can project innocence without naivete and can portray genuine goodness rather than the cloying kind. Yet Oddie's face is not Tobey Maguire's. It is nothing like the face of any actor anyone has named.

When we developed an avatar of Oddie for the website, we came up with one that I liked. But it's not his face. I thought at first that the limitations of avatar design would not allow us the detail necessary to capture the real Odd Thomas.

When the wonderful Queenie Chan presented her engaging sketches for the book you hold in your hands, I liked her Odd very much, and felt he worked perfectly for a manga. But this was not Odd's face any more than Tobey Maguire's face is Odd's.

As I write this, I am at work on Odd Hours, and I have begun to understand why Oddie's face will not materialize in my mind when I strive to envision it. The reason for this arises from Odd's destiny and from his fundamental nature, which have become apparent to me as I work on this book. Because he is an archetypal character in a way I did not fully understand until he revealed it to me during this fourth novel, no face is right for him; every face is his face, in one sense, and in another sense, he is not to be understood whatsoever by his appearance but only by what will prove to be his fundamental nature, which is why his face eludes me.

I now believe that, God willing, there will be six Odd Thomas novels. His end will prove to be there in his beginning, and his beginning in his end. When I get to the last page of the sixth book, I believe it will be apparent to me that everything in the series was to be foreseen in the first book, perhaps in the first chapter of the first book. And yet where I find this going is a great surprise to me and extremely exciting. Pulling off books five and six with the grace they require will be an epic challenge, and all I can do is follow my fry cook and hope that, when it's over, I will feel that the whole series was as much a gift to me as was the first book.

Odd's adventures continue in several full-length novels by Dean Koontz. Read on for a sample chapter from *Odd Thomas*, in which a stranger comes to Pico Mundo accompanied by a horde of hyena-like shades who herald an imminent catastrophe. Odd, Stormy, Chief Porter, and others must race against time to thwart the gathering evil. *Odd Thomas* is published by Bantam Books and © 2003 by Dean Koontz.

ONE

MY NAME IS ODD THOMAS, though in this age when fame is the altar at which most people worship, I am not sure why you should care who I am or that I exist.

I am not a celebrity. I am not the child of a celebrity. I have never been married to, never been abused by, and never provided a kidney for transplantation into any celebrity. Furthermore, I have no desire to be a celebrity.

In fact I am such a nonentity by the standards of our culture that *People* magazine not only will never feature a piece about me but might also reject my attempts to subscribe to their publication on the grounds that the black-hole gravity of my noncelebrity is powerful enough to suck their entire enterprise into oblivion.

I am twenty years old. To a world-wise adult, I am little more than a child. To any child, however, I'm old enough to be distrusted, to be excluded forever from the magical community of the short and beardless.

Consequently, a demographics expert might conclude that my sole audience is other young men and women currently adrift between their twentieth and twenty-first birthdays.

In truth, I have nothing to say to that narrow audience. In my experience, I don't care about most of the things that other twenty-year-old Americans care about. Except survival, of course.

I lead an unusual life.

By this I do not mean that my life is better than yours. I'm sure that your life is filled with as much happiness, charm, wonder, and abiding fear as anyone could wish. Like me, you are human, after all, and we know what a joy and terror *that* is.

I mean only that my life is not typical. Peculiar things happen to me that don't happen to other people with regularity, if ever.

For example, I would never have written this memoir if I had not been commanded to do so by a four-hundred-pound man with six

fingers on his left hand.

His name is P. Oswald Boone. Everyone calls him Little Ozzie because his father, Big Ozzie, is still alive.

Little Ozzie has a cat named Terrible Chester. He loves that cat. In fact, if Terrible Chester were to use up his ninth life under the wheels of a Peterbilt, I am afraid that Little Ozzie's big heart would not survive the loss.

Personally, I do not have great affection for Terrible Chester because, for one thing, he has on several occasions peed on my shoes.

His reason for doing so, as explained by Ozzie, seems credible, but I am not convinced of his truthfulness. I mean to say that I am suspicious of Terrible Chester's veracity, not Ozzie's.

Besides, I simply cannot fully trust a cat who claims to be fifty-eight years old. Although photographic evidence exists to support this claim, I persist in believing that it's bogus.

For reasons that will become obvious, this manuscript cannot be published during my lifetime, and my effort will not be repaid with royalties while I'm alive. Little Ozzie suggests that I should leave my literary estate to the loving maintenance of Terrible Chester, who, according to him, will outlive all of us.

I will choose another charity. One that has not peed on me.

Anyway, I'm not writing this for money. I am writing it to save my sanity and to discover if I can convince myself that my life has purpose and meaning enough to justify continued existence.

Don't worry: These ramblings will not be insufferably gloomy. P. Oswald Boone has sternly instructed me to keep the tone light.

"If you don't keep it light," Ozzie said, "I'll sit my four-hundred-pound ass on you, and that's *not* the way you want to die."

Ozzie is bragging. His ass, while grand enough, probably weighs no more than a hundred and fifty pounds. The other two hundred fifty are distributed across the rest of his suffering skeleton.

When at first I proved unable to keep the tone light, Ozzie suggested that I be an unreliable narrator. "It worked for Agatha Christie in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*," he said.

In that first-person mystery novel, the nice-guy narrator turns out to be the murderer of Roger Ackroyd, a fact he conceals from the reader until the end.

Understand, I am not a murderer. I have done nothing evil that I am concealing from you. My unreliability as a narrator has to do largely with the tense of certain verbs.

Don't worry about it. You'll know the truth soon enough.

Anyway, I'm getting ahead of my story. Little Ozzie and Terrible Chester do not enter the picture until after the cow explodes.

This story began on a Tuesday.

For you, that is the day after Monday. For me, it is a day that, like the other six, brims with the potential for mystery, adventure, and terror.

You should not take this to mean that my life is romantic and magical. Too much mystery is merely an annoyance. Too much adventure is exhausting. And a little terror goes a long way.

Without the help of an alarm clock, I woke that Tuesday morning at five, from a dream about dead bowling-alley employees.

I never set the alarm because my internal clock is so reliable. If I wish to wake promptly at five, then before going to bed I tell myself three times that I must be awake sharply at 4:45.

While reliable, my internal alarm clock for some reason runs fifteen minutes slow. I learned this years ago and have adjusted to the problem.

The dream about the dead bowling-alley employees has troubled my sleep once or twice a month for three years. The details are not yet specific enough to act upon. I will have to wait and hope that clarification doesn't come to me too late.

So I woke at five, sat up in bed, and said, "Spare me that I may serve," which is the morning prayer that my Granny Sugars taught me to say when I was little.

Pearl Sugars was my mother's mother. If she had been my father's mother, my name would be Odd Sugars, further complicating my life.

Granny Sugars believed in bargaining with God. She called Him "that old rug merchant."

Before every poker game, she promised God to spread His holy word or to share her good fortune with orphans in return for a few unbeatable hands. Throughout her life, winnings from card games remained a significant source of income.

Being a hard-drinking woman with numerous interests in addition to poker, Granny Sugars didn't always spend as much time spreading God's word as she promised Him that she would. She believed that God expected to be conned more often than not and that He would be a good sport about it.

You can con God and get away with it, Granny said, if you do so with charm and wit. If you live your life with imagination and verve, God will play along just to see what outrageously entertaining thing you'll do next.

He'll also cut you some slack if you're astonishingly stupid in an amusing fashion. Granny claimed that this explains why uncountable millions of breathtakingly stupid people get along just fine in life.

Of course, in the process, you must never do harm to others in any serious way, or you'll cease to amuse Him. Then payment comes due for the promises you didn't keep.

In spite of drinking lumberjacks under the table, regularly winning at poker with stone-hearted psychopaths who didn't like to lose, driving fast cars with utter contempt for the laws of physics (but never while intoxicated), and eating a diet rich in pork fat, Granny Sugars died peacefully in her sleep at the age of seventy-two. They found her with a nearly empty snifter of brandy on the nightstand, a book by her favorite novelist turned to the last page, and a smile on her face.

Judging by all available evidence, Granny and God understood each other pretty well.

Pleased to be alive that Tuesday morning, on the dark side of the dawn, I switched on my nightstand lamp and surveyed the chamber that served as my bedroom, living room, kitchen, and dining room. I never get out of bed until I know who, if anyone, is waiting for me.

If visitors either benign or malevolent had spent part of the night watching me sleep, they had not lingered for a breakfast chat. Sometimes simply getting from bed to bathroom can take the charm out of a new day.

Only Elvis was there, wearing the lei of orchids, smiling, and pointing one finger at me as if it were a cocked gun.

Although I enjoy living above this particular two-car garage, and though I find my quarters cozy, *Architectural Digest* will not be seeking an exclusive photo layout. If one of their glamour scouts saw my place, he'd probably note, with disdain, that the second word in

the magazine's name is not, after all, *Indigestion*.

The life-size cardboard figure of Elvis, part of a theater-lobby display promoting *Blue Hawaii*, was where I'd left it. Occasionally, it moves—or is moved—during the night.

I showered with peach-scented soap and peach shampoo, which were given to me by Stormy Llewellyn. Her real first name is Bronwen, but she thinks that makes her sound like an elf.

My real name actually is Odd.

According to my mother, this is an uncorrected birth-certificate error. Sometimes she says they intended to name me Todd. Other times she says it was Dobb, after a Czechoslovakian uncle.

My father insists that they always intended to name me Odd, although he won't tell me why. He notes that I don't have a Czechoslovakian uncle.

My mother vigorously asserts the existence of the uncle, though she refuses to explain why I've never met either him or her sister, Cymry, to whom he is supposedly married.

Although my father acknowledges the existence of Cymry, he is adamant that she has never married. He says that she is a freak, but what he means by this I don't know, for he will say no more.

My mother becomes infuriated at the suggestion that her sister is any kind of freak. She calls Cymry a gift from God but otherwise remains uncommunicative on the subject.

I find it easier to live with the name Odd than to contest it. By the time I was old enough to realize that it was an unusual name, I had grown comfortable with it.

Stormy Llewellyn and I are more than friends. We believe that we are soul mates.

For one thing, we have a card from a carnival fortune-telling machine that says we're destined to be together forever.

We also have matching birthmarks.

Cards and birthmarks aside, I love her intensely. I would throw myself off a high cliff for her if she asked me to jump. I would, of course, need to understand the reasoning behind her request.

Fortunately for me, Stormy is not the kind of person to ask such a thing lightly. She expects nothing of others that she herself would not

do. In treacherous currents, she is kept steady by a moral anchor the size of a ship.

She once brooded for an entire day about whether to keep fifty cents that she found in the change-return slot of a pay phone. At last she mailed it to the telephone company.

Returning to the cliff for a moment, I don't mean to imply that I'm afraid of Death. I'm just not ready to go out on a date with him.

Smelling like a peach, as Stormy likes me, not afraid of Death, having eaten a blueberry muffin, saying good-bye to Elvis with the words "Taking care of business" in a lousy imitation of his voice, I set off for work at the Pico Mundo Grille.

Although the dawn had just broken, it had already flash-fried into a hard yellow yolk on the eastern horizon.

The town of Pico Mundo is in that part of southern California where you can never forget that in spite of all the water imported by the state aqueduct system, the true condition of the territory is desert. In March we bake. In August, which this was, we broil.

The ocean lay so far to the west that it was no more real to us than the Sea of Tranquility, that vast dark plain on the face of the moon.

Occasionally, when excavating for a new subdivision of tract homes on the outskirts of town, developers had struck rich veins of seashells in their deeper diggings. Once upon an ancient age, waves lapped these shores.

If you put one of those shells to your ear, you will not hear the surf breaking but only a dry mournful wind, as if the shell has forgotten its origins.

At the foot of the exterior steps that led down from my small apartment, in the early sun, Penny Kallisto waited like a shell on a shore. She wore red sneakers, white shorts, and a sleeveless white blouse.

Ordinarily, Penny had none of that preadolescent despair to which some kids prove so susceptible these days. She was an ebullient twelve-year-old, outgoing and quick to laugh.

This morning, however, she looked solemn. Her blue eyes darkened as does the sea under the passage of a cloud.

I glanced toward the house, fifty feet away, where my landlady, Rosalia Sanchez, would be expecting me at any minute to confirm that

she had not disappeared during the night. The sight of herself in a mirror was never sufficient to put her fear to rest.

Without a word, Penny turned away from the stairs. She walked toward the front of the property.

Like a pair of looms, using sunshine and their own silhouettes, two enormous California live oaks wove veils of gold and purple, which they flung across the driveway.

Penny appeared to shimmer and to darkle as she passed through this intricate lace of light and shade. A black mantilla of shadow dimmed the luster of her blond hair, its elaborate pattern changing as she moved.

Afraid of losing her, I hurried down the last of the steps and followed the girl. Mrs. Sanchez would have to wait, and worry.

Penny led me past the house, off the driveway, to a birdbath on the front lawn. Around the base of the pedestal that supported the basin, Rosalia Sanchez had arranged a collection of dozens of the seashells, all shapes and sizes, that had been scooped from the hills of Pico Mundo.

Penny stooped, selected a specimen about the size of an orange, stood once more, and held it out to me.

The architecture resembled that of a conch. The rough exterior was brown and white, the polished interior shone pearly pink.

Cupping her right hand as though she still held the shell, Penny brought it to her ear. She cocked her head to listen, thus indicating what she wanted me to do.

When I put the shell to my ear, I did not hear the sea. Neither did I hear the melancholy desert wind that I mentioned previously.

Instead, from the shell came the rough breathing of a beast. The urgent rhythm of a cruel need, the grunt of mad desire.

Here in the summer desert, winter found my blood.

When she saw from my expression that I had heard what she wished me to hear, Penny crossed the lawn to the public sidewalk. She stood at the curb, gazing toward the west end of Marigold Lane.

I dropped the shell, went to her side, and waited with her.

Evil was coming. I wondered whose face it would be wearing.

Old Indian laurels line this street. Their great gnarled surface roots

have in places cracked and buckled the concrete walkway.

Not a whisper of air moved through the trees. The morning lay as uncannily still as dawn on Judgment Day one breath before the sky would crack open.

Like Mrs. Sanchez's place, most houses in this neighborhood are Victorian in style, with varying degrees of gingerbread. When Pico Mundo was founded, in 1900, many residents were immigrants from the East Coast, and they preferred architectures better suited to that distant colder, damper shore.

Perhaps they thought they could bring to this valley only those things they loved, leaving behind all ugliness.

We are not, however, a species that can choose the baggage with which it must travel. In spite of our best intentions, we always find that we have brought along a suitcase or two of darkness, and misery.

For half a minute, the only movement was that of a hawk gliding high above, glimpsed between laurel branches.

The hawk and I were hunters this morning.

Penny Kallisto must have sensed my fear. She took my right hand in her left.

I was grateful for this kindness. Her grip proved firm, and her hand did not feel cold. I drew courage from her strong spirit.

Because the car was idling in gear, rolling at just a few miles per hour, I didn't hear anything until it turned the corner. When I recognized the vehicle, I knew a sadness equal to my fear.

This 1968 Pontiac Firebird 400 had been restored with loving care. The two-door, midnight-blue convertible appeared to glide toward us with all tires a fraction of an inch off the pavement, shimmering like a mirage in the morning heat.

Harlo Landerson and I had been in the same high-school class. During his junior and senior years, Harlo rebuilt this car from the axles up, until it looked as cherry as it had in the autumn of '67, when it had first stood on a showroom floor.

Self-effacing, somewhat shy, Harlo had not labored on the car with the hope either that it would be a babe magnet or that those who had thought of him as tepid would suddenly think he was cool enough to freeze the mercury in a thermometer. He'd had no social ambitions. He had suffered no illusions about his chances of ever rising above the

lower ranks of the high-school caste system.

With a 335-horsepower V-8 engine, the Firebird could sprint from zero to sixty miles per hour in under eight seconds. Yet Harlo wasn't a street racer; he took no special pride in having wheels of fury.

He devoted much time, labor, and money to the Firebird because the beauty of its design and function enchanted him. This was a labor of the heart, a passion almost spiritual in its purity and intensity.

I sometimes thought the Pontiac figured so large in Harlo's life because he had no one to whom he could give the love that he lavished on the car. His mom died when he was six. His dad was a mean drunk.

A car can't return the love you give it. But if you're lonely enough, maybe the sparkle of the chrome, the luster of the paint, and the purr of the engine can be mistaken for affection.

Harlo and I hadn't been buddies, just friendly. I liked the guy. He was quiet, but quiet was better than the boast and bluster with which many kids jockeyed for social position in high school.

With Penny Kallisto still at my side, I raised my left hand and waved at Harlo.

Since high school, he'd worked hard. Nine to five, he unloaded trucks at Super Food and moved stock from storeroom to shelves.

Before that, beginning at 4:00 A.M., he dropped hundreds of newspapers at homes on the east side of Pico Mundo. Once each week, he also delivered to *every* house a plastic bag full of advertising flyers and discount-coupon books.

This morning, he distributed only newspapers, tossing them with a snap of the wrist, as though they were boomerangs. Each folded and bagged copy of the Tuesday edition of the *Maravilla County Times* spun through the air and landed with a soft *thwop* on a driveway or a front walk, precisely where the subscriber preferred to have it.

Harlo was working the far side of the street. When he reached the house opposite me, he braked the coasting Pontiac to a stop.

Penny and I crossed to the car, and Harlo said, "Good mornin', Odd. How're you this fine day?"

"Bleak," I replied. "Sad. Confused."

He frowned with concern. "What's wrong? Anything I can do?"

“Something you’ve already done,” I said.

Letting go of Penny’s hand, I leaned into the Firebird from the passenger’s side, switched off the engine, and plucked the key from the ignition.

Startled, Harlo grabbed for the keys but missed. “Hey, Odd, no foolin’ around, okay? I have a tight schedule.”

I never heard Penny’s voice, but in the rich yet silent language of the soul, she must have spoken to me.

What I said to Harlo Landerson was the essence of what the girl revealed: “You have her blood in your pocket.”

An innocent man would have been baffled by my statement. Harlo stared at me, his eyes suddenly owlish not with wisdom but with fear.

“On that night,” I said, “you took with you three small squares of white felt.”

One hand still on the wheel, Harlo looked away from me, through the windshield, as if willing the Pontiac to move.

“After using the girl, you collected some of her virgin blood with the squares of felt.”

Harlo shivered. His face flushed red, perhaps with shame.

Anguish thickened my voice. “They dried stiff and dark, brittle like crackers.”

His shivers swelled into violent tremors.

“You carry one of them with you at all times.” My voice shook with emotion. “You like to smell it. Oh, God, Harlo. Sometimes you put it between your teeth. And bite on it.”

He threw open the driver’s door and fled.

I’m not the law. I’m not vigilante justice. I’m not vengeance personified. I don’t really know what I am, or why.

In moments like these, however, I can’t restrain myself from action. A kind of madness comes over me, and I can no more turn away from what must be done than I can wish this fallen world back into a state of grace.

As Harlo burst from the Pontiac, I looked down at Penny Kallisto and saw the ligature marks on her throat, which had not been visible when she had first appeared to me. The depth to which the garroting cloth had scored her flesh revealed the singular fury with which he had

strangled her to death.

Pity tore at me, and I went after Harlo Landerson, for whom I had no pity whatsoever.

ARTIST'S SKETCHBOOK

Queenie Chan worked closely with Dean Koontz to arrive at the visual representation of each character. Some of her preliminary sketches appear on the pages that follow, along with her comments on the creation process.

Odd Thomas



ODD, AS THE EPONYMOUS CHARACTER WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND THE MOST DIFFICULT DESIGN I HAD TO DO.

ODD IS MEANT TO BE AN EVERYMAN, AN AVERAGE-LOOKING GUY WHO IS QUIET AND GENTLE, YET CAPABLE OF GREAT STRENGTH (BOTH INNER AND OUTER) WHEN REQUIRED.

THIS MEANS HIS DESIGN CAN'T BE OUTLANDISH, BUT STILL HAS TO BE UNIQUE AND EASILY RECOGNIZABLE. HE ALSO HAS TO BE ATTRACTIVE-LOOKING FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE READERS, BUT NOT *TOO* GOOD-LOOKING, SINCE HE'S NOT MEANT TO BE HANDSOME.

IN THE END, I'M VERY HAPPY WITH THIS DESIGN OF ODD, WHICH HAS A HAIRSTYLE MORE SUITED TO DEAN'S VISION OF THIS CHARACTER. HE HAS AN EXPRESSIVE FACE IN THIS DESIGN, BOTH OPEN AND HONEST, AS WELL AS AN EASYGOING AND HUMBLE APPEARANCE.



THIS PICTURE IN THE CORNER WAS
THE FIRST PICTURE I EVER DREW
OF ODD.

I SCRAPPED
IT PRETTY
QUICKLY,
AS IT'S
RATHER
GENERIC-
LOOKING
COMPARED
TO THE LATER
DESIGN.



Stormy Llewellyn

I HAD AN IMAGE OF WHAT STORMY LOOKED LIKE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING - A DARK, MYSTERIOUS, ASS-KICKING BABE OF MEDITERRANEAN DESCENT. SHE HAS STRIKING EYES AND A CALM, KNOWING GAZE.

BECAUSE HER NICKNAME IS "STORMY," I WANTED TO GIVE HER WISPY HAIR, MUCH LIKE ANGRY STORM CLOUDS. IT'S ONLY FITTING THAT SHE HAS BLACK HAIR.



Police Chief Wyatt Porter



CHIEF PORTER'S INITIAL DESIGN WAS WILDLY OFF THE MARK - HE WAS THE ONLY CHARACTER WHO REQUIRED MAJOR DESIGN REVISIONS. HE WENT THROUGH 15 RE-DESIGNS BEFORE I SLIMMED HIM DOWN TO THE PRESENT VERSION.

THE NOVELS DESCRIBED CHIEF PORTER AS HAVING "DROOPY FACIAL MUSCLES," BUT HE'S REALLY MEANT TO BEAR A STRONG RESEMBLANCE TO ACTOR KURT RUSSELL (SO IT'S MEANT TO BE FLESHY MIDDLE-AGED HANDSOMENESS).

IRONICALLY, THE PICTURE OF KURT RUSSELL I USED AS REFERENCE WAS FROM THE QUENTIN TARANTINO MOVIE "DEATH PROOF," WHERE HE PLAYED A SERIAL KILLER.



REJECTED



AMENDED

Sherry Sheldon



SHERRY'S DESIGN IS A COUNTERPOINT TO STORMY'S - SHE AND STORMY ARE MEANT TO LOOK LIKE POLAR OPPOSITES.

SHERRY IS AN ATTRACTIVE GIRL, BUT SHE COULD EASILY MAKE HERSELF MORE ATTRACTIVE BY DOING SOMETHING ABOUT HER HAIR AND HER GLASSES.

HER LOOKS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR HER PROFESSION, THOUGH - A NANNY SHOULDN'T BE TOO ATTRACTIVE.



Terri Stambaugh



TERRI'S DESIGN WAS PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD - SHE'S A NICE MIDDLE-AGED LADY AND SHE LOOKS THE PART. I GAVE HER BRIGHT, GENTLE EYES TO EXEMPLIFY THAT.

SINCE HER MOST IMPORTANT ROLE IS AS ODD'S SURROGATE MOTHER, I TRIED TO GIVE HER A "MOTHERLY" FEEL, COMPLETE WITH JEANS AND AN APRON AROUND HER WAIST.

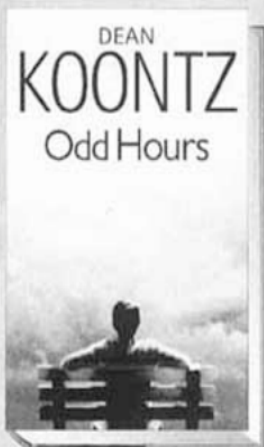


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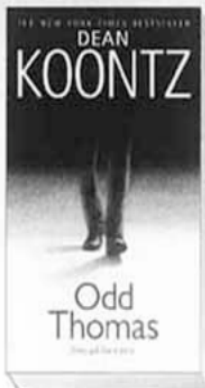
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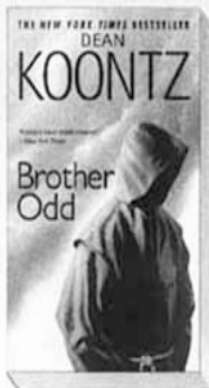
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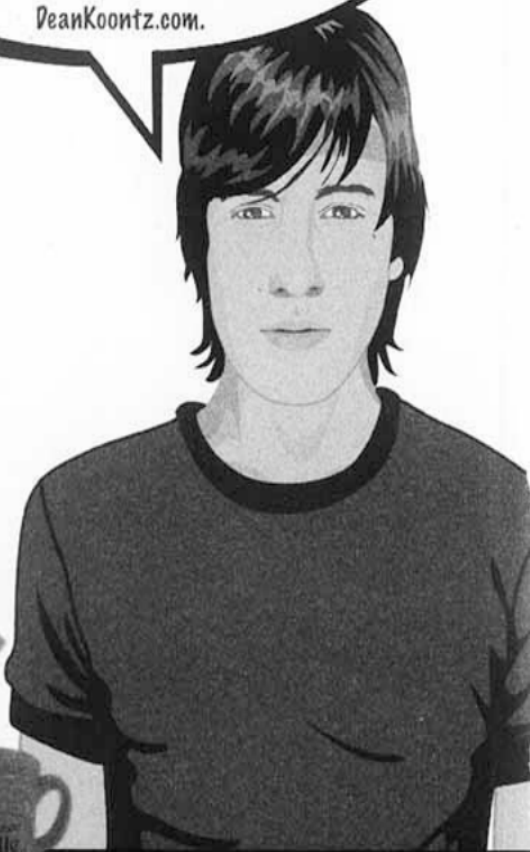
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